



High Spen Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108340
LEA Gateshead
Inspection number 277951
Inspection dates 31 January 2006 to 1 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Alastair Younger

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Hugar Road
School category	Community		High Spen
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Rowlands Gill, Tyne and Wear
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01207 542373
Number on roll	145	Fax number	01207 544871
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Lynne Caffrey
Date of previous inspection	1 June 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Jean Fisher

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3 to 11	31 January 2006 - 1 February 2006	277951

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. It has 145 pupils on roll and a further 18 children attend the attached nursery. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. Attainment on entry is very varied but below average for the authority. This reflects the working class heritage of the area. Nearly all pupils are white and British. A more than average number of families move into or leave the area each year. Almost a third of Year 6 pupils who took tests at the end of last year were not in the school at the end of Year 2. The school has a growing reputation for helping pupils with learning difficulties. In 2004 it was awarded the Quality Mark for teaching basic skills.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school's own evaluation that it is a good school is correct. It stands at the very heart of the community and is held in high esteem by parents, pupils and the local authority. You cannot visit the school without gaining the impression that it is a vibrant, happy place where pupils thrive and make good progress. Vivid displays celebrate pupils' achievements and contribute enormously to the creation of a delightful environment for learning. Progress is good. Standards rose steadily after the last inspection until last year, when test results slipped, especially in mathematics. Close inspection of the reason for this reveals that the situation is not as worrying as first seems but it does mean that standards are satisfactory rather than good. Good teaching is the norm. This leads to pupils learning well from the start of the Foundation Stage. The curriculum is good and includes many exciting activities. Exceptional care and guidance contribute to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. It is especially effective in aiding the emotional development of children in the Foundation Stage, preparing them particularly well for entering Year 1. The school recognised that 'every child matters' long before the phrase became so well publicised. This is central to the school's work and ensures that pupils leave as particularly well-adapted individuals with a zest for life. The school is in a healthy financial state. It gives good value for money and is well led and managed. Many improvements have been made since the last inspection and there is no reason to doubt that improvement will continue.

not applicable

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics, taking opportunities in other subjects to improve pupils' numeracy.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Many pupils start school with below average prospects but most leave having made good progress and reaching a satisfactory standard. The best progress occurs in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Last year's test results at the end of Year 6 showed that standards in English were slightly above average, the school's targets were met and the pupils' achievement was good. In mathematics, however, standards were below average. Some pupils leaving and others joining the school and some narrow misses in the tests were partly responsible for the school not meeting its targets. Prompt action taken by the school has improved the teaching of mathematics throughout the school. The pupils are making good progress in lessons in all classes and are well on course to meet this year's targets. There is little evidence to suggest any difference in the performance of any group of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This is where the school excels. Pupils attend whenever they can, work hard and live life to the full. They are strongly encouraged to reflect on their own lives and helped to understand the views of others. This contributes enormously to their prospects of leaving school with bright futures ahead of them. Nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well. When they do not it is nearly always the result of personal crisis, linked to recognised individual difficulties. It is a measure of pupils' excellent moral development that they understand when other pupils experience difficulty and do not make matters worse. Pupils are hugely sociable. They are polite, confident and friendly. The school is central and indispensable to the community. Local groups make extensive use of its facilities and pupils learn about the history and culture of the village and some of its notable characters. Pupils' awareness of the importance of safety is demonstrated by their sensible behaviour and consideration for other people. They also learn how to stay safe on the roads and how to avoid the dangers of bad habits. For each of the last eight years, recognition has been gained for promoting healthy lifestyles. Pupils are energetic. They get a good dose of physical exercise as part of the timetable and they play with abandon at breaks.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good. The enthusiasm and commitment of teachers are reflected in lively lessons and wonderful displays, which celebrate pupils' achievements and help them to learn. Teachers make learning interesting and make good use of a wide range of good quality resources and support staff. There is little time for boredom to set in so pupils work hard and behave well. Teachers have a good understanding of pupils. A while ago it was recognised that work could be marked more constructively. The measures taken have resulted in pupils being given much clearer guidance as to where they are making mistakes and how they can improve their work. No problem with mathematics teaching had been identified last year. The school had received the Quality Mark for teaching basic skills and a Leading Teacher for mathematics was on the staff. Extra support with planning has since been given and there have been demonstrations of good practice. The teaching of mathematics is now good. Homework is nearly always English or mathematics. A few parents would like a bit more variety to bring more enjoyment to learning and discovery at home. This seems a perfectly reasonable idea and could even lead to the freeing up of a bit more school time to promote learning in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. An outstanding range of exciting activities, often with a local flavour or involving visitors, adds considerably to pupils' enjoyment of learning. A strong programme of personal, health and social education complements a good focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. This gives good support to pupils' prospects of future economic well-being. Good, imaginative changes are being made in the way other subjects are taught through project work. These are opening up better opportunities for pupils to see how different subjects relate to each other. There is a good opportunity here for the school to give more consideration as to how project work can contribute to raising numeracy standards. Good notice is taken of the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. Precise assessment helps with the preparation of work well suited to their ability and the directing of extra support to help them to make good progress. Shared planning between the nursery and Foundation Stage classes makes sure that transfer between the two is smooth and at each successive stage this progression is carefully maintained.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

These are outstanding. Staff ensure that pupils thrive in a safe environment. Potential risk in activities is carefully considered and supervision of pupils at all times in the day effectively ensures their safety. Academic progress, personal development and potential vulnerability to failure are carefully monitored. Where extra support is needed, individual plans show how it will be given and what other agencies might need to be involved. In Year 6, pupils on the borderline between levels of attainment are given 'booster' classes to help them achieve the higher level. Consultation with parents contributes to a strong, joint effort to raise standards. In a recent survey, every pupil said their views were listened to and that they were happy to share their worries with staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

These are good. The headteacher has a sparkling vision of the school that pupils, parents and the community want and deserve. There is a determination to avoid creating a 'hot house' environment in which ever-higher academic standards are pursued at the expense of pupils' happiness and development as well-rounded citizens. Last year's setback, though, served as a reminder that it is important not to let the balance tip too far towards being a nice school rather than an effective one. It brought an immediate response, with extra support for teaching, an earlier start to 'booster' classes and a sharper focus on the assessment of investigative and problem solving skills. These measures are working well. Managers' extensive awareness of pupils' triumphs and tribulations, and their close consultation with pupils and parents give them a very clear view of how effective the school is. Rigorous monitoring of all aspects of teaching and the curriculum contribute further to the process. Nearly all parents

express total confidence in managers. The good, supportive governing body is becoming increasingly involved in finding out for itself what goes on in school. Following concerns expressed by a parent, it is currently supporting improvement by reviewing the procedure for addressing complaints. Staff are given many, good opportunities to develop their skills and improve the effectiveness of their work. Good links are being forged with other schools. These contribute well to opening up new opportunities for pupils, such as using a secondary school laboratory, and also to staff development through the sharing of ideas and expertise.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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High Spen Primary School

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2 February 2006

Dear Pupils

I'm not in the least bit surprised that you like your school. So do I. My friend and I had a wonderful two days in your company. You made us very welcome and gave us a lot of 'inside information'. Thanks for sparing time to talk to us, even at break times when there were more tempting alternatives.

You are a great asset to the school and your parents should be proud of you. You behave well, work hard and give oldies, like me, great hope for the future. The school has a great headteacher and lots of good teachers. They make sure that other schools will look forward to your arrival when you have to leave High Spen. Did you know you were being watched? Nothing goes unnoticed, it's creepy, but it means you are being extremely well looked after. I can see why you enjoy school. There are lots of interesting things going on. I bet there are things you can tell your parents about the village that they didn't know themselves. Your teachers were really disappointed when last year's test results came out. Everyone had worked hard but the results, especially in maths, were disappointing. It's up to you Year 6 pupils to set the record straight. We looked at your work and confidently expect you to do well this summer. Please prove us right. We've asked the school to pull out the stops to make sure you do. Your bit is to work hard and remember that every mark matters.

All the best

Alastair Younger

(Lead inspector)