



Woodlea Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114009
LEA Durham
Inspection number 279296
Inspection dates 26 January 2006 to 27 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Fence Houses
School category	Community		Houghton le Spring
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Tyne and Wear, DH4 6AR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 3852675
Number on roll	238	Fax number	0191 385 2699
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Michael Close
Date of previous inspection	1 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr Peter Robinson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school with a stable population. The local area has few signs of deprivation. Most children are white British. A very small number come from several minority ethnic groups, including refugees and children whose first language is not English. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The number of free school meals is below average. The school has recently faced considerable challenges caused by the prolonged absence of senior staff and particularly the headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Inspectors judge the school to be outstanding, which is higher than the school's own judgement. One parent's view is typical of many: 'I feel this is an excellent school and would recommend it to any parent.' The school provides outstanding value for money.

The excellent leadership and management of the headteacher are at the core of this highly successful school. As a result, the school knows itself well, improvement has been good and there is a strong capacity and commitment to improve further. Provision in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) is good and children reach above the standards typical for their age. Throughout the school, standards have, over time, continued to rise and there is outstanding work in reading, mathematics and science. By the age of 11, standards in English, mathematics and science are high and the children have made exceptional progress. The curriculum provides an extremely wide range of opportunities. Children are very safe, secure and happy in school and their personal development and well-being is exceptional because of the exemplary care and ethos. Links with outside agencies are very strong and promote learning and well-being. The teaching staff has undergone several recent changes at the senior level because of illness and other long term leave. However, exemplary planning has meant that the quality of teaching is good, with a strong element of outstanding practice.

What the school should do to improve further

In this outstanding school there is a strong awareness of what needs to be done to improve further. Its clear priorities include:

- the further raising of standards in writing by:
- developing assessment and marking practices that will provide staff and children with even clearer targets for improvement
- increasing the opportunities for children to write across the full range of subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement and standards are outstanding. Children enter the Foundation Stage with broadly average standards. They make good progress and reach standards above those for their age by the end of reception. Children make good progress in Years 1 and 2, where their basic skills are carefully developed. These are particularly strong in reading and mathematics. The inspection indicates that recent improvements in the teaching of writing are beginning to show results. In Years 3 to 6, some teaching is outstanding and children have exemplary attitudes to learning. As a result, progress is strong and children's interests are fired by the very broad programme of work. Consequently, standards by Year 6 are high. The school sets challenging targets, and, in national tests, progress in mathematics and science is in the top 5% of schools nationally. English results are not as high, because standards in writing are improving

more slowly. The school is very aware of this and initiatives are raising standards, such as improvements in assessment and in using writing across other subjects.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make progress at the same rate as the rest. More able and talented children reach the challenging targets set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Children's behaviour and attitudes to work and school are excellent. Relationships are extremely strong both between the children and with the adults. Children know the difference between right and wrong and are unfailingly polite. All children benefit greatly by being in this challenging, calm, supportive and purposeful atmosphere. They play a full and important part in the maintenance of this superb atmosphere by willingly taking on a range of responsibilities. Assemblies are a time for reflection and the celebration of individual endeavour and success. As a result, they create a strong sense of unity and children feel valued for their achievements.

Attendance is above the national average because children love school. They have a strong sense of pride in its achievements. These successes include many awards for academic and pastoral successes, such as the Healthy Schools Award. Children understand the benefits of diet and exercise because the school actively promotes healthy living lifestyles. Children are well prepared for their future through the good and better teaching and the extensive range of other experiences on offer, for example, running the school newspaper and the healthy 'tuck shop'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school is right to judge teaching as good. The quality is very rarely less than good and outstanding practice was observed in Years 3 and 6. In the best lessons, the strong elements of teaching are:

- thorough planning that mostly meets the needs of all children
- excellent use of information and communication technology to explain and illustrate difficult ideas, such as how to use a protractor accurately
- excellent relationships in classrooms
- very strong and sensitive management of children.

Assessment is used well to match work accurately to individual children. Usually marking is good and provides children with a clear picture of the progress they are making and areas to improve. However, this aspect is less strong in the marking of writing and the school is trialling a new method which is intended to more closely match work to children's individual needs. In the very best lessons, teachers' questions are searching

and challenging. These teachers also manage to ensure that even the most reticent child has a chance to make a contribution in the lesson. This was admirably clear in the outstanding Year 3 French lesson. Children are very confident, attentive and willing to work in partnerships.

The basis for the excellent reading standards later in the school is found in the outstanding work in the Foundation Stage in teaching basic skills, particularly the knowledge and understanding of letter sounds.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from good Individual Education Plans and the effective support of adults.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and promotes learning very effectively. The school provides a rich and interesting programme that is well matched to children's needs. The programme in the Foundation Stage is very broad and provides the children with the necessary basic skills and motivation for academic and personal development. Throughout the school, planning is thorough and provides all children with an exemplary range of activities, including philosophy and French. Children gain new skills and develop a wider understanding of the world beyond the classroom because of:

- the extremely varied range of popular out of school activities, such as journalism, golf and other sports clubs
- the rich range of visits and visitors.

Excellent links with other schools have a positive impact on the children's learning, for example joint planning and work was undertaken with other schools in developing poetry for a performance. As a result of this excellent programme and good teaching children make consistently good progress over their time in the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Teachers know their children really well because they monitor all aspects of their time in school. For example:

- academic achievements are tracked very diligently and needs are met;
- behaviour and attendance are watched very closely and if the need arises direct contact is made with parents. Good relationships with outside agencies mean that their expertise is used very effectively.

As a result, children's self esteem is high and their parents are very impressed by the exemplary care their children receive. When children start in the nursery there is a full and helpful programme to introduce them to the school, including visits to homes. Child protection procedures are rigorous and staff know what to do if an issue arises. The very useful staff handbook is a goldmine of important information on all aspects of care and welfare. Training is held on a regular basis.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Inspectors judge the leadership and management of the school to be outstanding, which is higher than the school's own judgement. This has been achieved despite difficult and unforeseen circumstances. The headteacher sets high standards for children and staff and ensures everyone works successfully towards them. Results in national tests are ample evidence of this, particularly by the end of Year 6. The comment of one parent expressed the view of many:

'The management of the school is excellent and during Mr Robinson's recent illness he ensured his absence did not affect the running of the school.' Inspectors entirely agree with these views and commend the staff and excellent governors for their exemplary support at this very difficult time. Successes are achieved by meticulous monitoring and sensitive support, for example, through accurate data analysis and regular observations of teaching. The ongoing analysis of the findings has provided the headteacher and leadership team with an accurate view on standards and the school's most important priorities. Morale is high because of the effective team work, hard work and dedication of the staff. Everyone's contribution is valued. Leaders within the school are well aware of its strengths and areas for development, such as raising standards further in writing. As a result the school is very well placed to improve further.

The governing body is extremely active and has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a highly effective 'critical friend' it ensures clear and extensive improvement planning as well as very prudent financial planning and management.

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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	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	1	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	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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	1	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?	1	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?	1	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	1	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	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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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26 January 2006

Dear Children

The inspectors thoroughly enjoyed being in your outstanding school this week. We give a special thanks to those who talked with us and we were very impressed by the courtesy and help you provided.

What we really liked about your school:

the outstanding progress you make and the way you enjoy this happy school.

your excellent behaviour and the way that you very willingly take responsibility and help others

your very strong approach to keeping fit and healthy

the way that your opinions make an important contribution to the running of the school and to the local community

the overall good quality of the teaching and the outstanding work of some of your teachers

the excellent support that your parents give to the school

the outstanding way in which your school is led and managed.

All the staff know that there are still things that they could improve upon and help you to achieve even more.

What we have asked your teachers to continue improving:

the quality of your writing. At present, your work is progressing well, but you need to keep working hard in this area to make sure that your writing is as good as your reading and mathematics by the time you leave this school. You can help your teachers by always doing your best writing and trying to improve on your previous work.

The inspection team wishes you well and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Heap – Lead inspector