



Stamfordham First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122202
LEA Northumberland
Inspection number 281189
Inspection dates 9 February 2006 to 10 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr David Ford

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

Type of school	First	School address	Stamfordham
School category	Community		Newcastle upon Tyne
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		Tyne and Wear, NE18 0NA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01661 886358
Number on roll	63	Fax number	01661 886358
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Michael Brown
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Alison Higgs

Age group 3 to 9	Inspection dates 9 February 2006 - 10 February 2006	Inspection number 281189
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

Stamfordham First School serves the local village and its surroundings. Most pupils enter the school after attending the 'Stampers' pre-school group and, at this stage, overall levels of attainment are average. Approximately 15% of pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion of pupils who take free school meals is low. Six per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds but no pupil has English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an effective and well run school where pupils achieve well. This judgement is in line with the school's own view and illustrates the accuracy of its self-evaluation. This is particularly impressive given that there has been considerable disruption to the leadership over the past two years.

Pupils get off to a good start in the reception class, achieving good standards, and this good progress continues across the school. This is because teaching is good in all classes. Lessons are well planned and work is matched to the needs of pupils. Assessment of progress is accurate, although marking does not always give sufficient information on how pupils can improve.

Pupils enjoy school and are safe and secure. They feel that their views are considered although, currently, there is no formal approach to pupil consultation and so their input into school issues is somewhat ad hoc. Behaviour is very good and relationships at all levels are extremely positive. There are excellent systems to ensure pupils' safety and welfare and a particularly well thought out approach to managing any individual incidents of misbehaviour.

The school is well led and managed. The acting headteacher has worked effectively with her staff team to ensure that systems are in place to promote school improvement and the governors have done an outstanding job in supporting the school through the recent unsettled period. The school knows itself very well, has dealt with all the issues raised in the last inspection and has a comprehensive improvement plan for the future. This plan demonstrates the capacity to improve, although it contains a considerable number of initiatives that may prove difficult to implement fully in the planned timescale. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- As part of the current assessment developments ensure that marking in all classes provides pupils with guidance on improvement.
- Review the school improvement plan to ensure a manageable programme of key developments.
- Work with pupils to establish an agreed forum for their views to be considered.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good across the school. Pupils enter with average standards of attainment, although they are below average for a significant minority of pupils in mathematical understanding and personal development. Progress in the reception class is good, with pupils attaining good standards by the end of the year. In Years 1 and 2 this good progress continues and attainment in the national assessments at the end of Year 2 is consistently above the national average. The standard of handwriting was an issue at the last inspection; it is now good.

Good progress and above average levels of attainment are sustained in Years 3 and 4. Standards in reading and writing at the end of Year 4 are well above average and, although progress in some aspects of mathematics is slightly less rapid, attainment is still above average by the time that pupils leave the school. The good standard of handwriting is maintained, although sometimes the overall presentation of work is untidy.

Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make equally good progress and there are no differences between the achievements of boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and make good progress. Achievement is also good in other subjects of the curriculum, with some pupils achieving particularly well in music.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They really enjoy coming to school and attendance is well above the national average. Pupils are extremely well mannered; they care for each other and relate very well to adults. They work and play well together and behave extremely well. They are given responsibilities and take them very seriously. The buddy system, in which older children provide a point of help for others, works very well.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and are clear that their work helps them to learn. Although there is no formal pupils' council, they are very confident that their views are listened to and that their opinions matter. For example, pupils said that they could talk to the acting headteacher and that she would always do what she said she would do. They feel completely safe in school and are secure in their knowledge of procedures to follow if they have a problem.

Pupils have a good understanding of health issues. They run a healthy tuck shop and have considerable opportunities for exercise through curricular and extra curricular sport, as well as at playtimes when they are encouraged to make full use of the outstanding outdoor environment. Plans to grow fruit and vegetables in a school garden will further reinforce these health messages.

Pupils have significant involvement in the local community through charitable work and initiatives, such as offering to take responsibility for litter collection in the village. They have a good understanding of a range of cultures and overall their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good across the school. Lessons are well planned and they are characterised by clear learning objectives and well understood routines. Teaching and support staff work well together, with a good balance between oversight of individual children with

particular difficulties and more general support. Pupils' work is carefully marked with supportive comments, although there is less evidence, particularly with older children, of clear advice on the next steps that would help them improve.

Teaching in the reception class is very well matched to the needs of young learners and they make good progress academically and socially because of this. In the other two classes teaching is also carefully managed to meet the range of prior learning and this ensures that all children progress well. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards to stimulate pupils' thinking, and questioning effectively probes understanding. Lessons across the school are purposeful and children respond by working conscientiously. Occasionally, however, in Years 3 and 4, the pace of learning slows for some pupils with the result that they lose concentration.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is carefully planned to ensure that all subjects are covered and to take into account the mixed age classes. Particular attention has been given to reading over the last year and this is reflected in the high levels achieved. Writing is well developed and there are particularly good opportunities provided for the oldest pupils to write for a range of purposes. The school is currently working hard to improve specific aspects of mathematics to ensure that pupils develop good factual recall and problem solving skills.

There is a good range of curricular enrichment with pupils being given the opportunity to learn French and to play a musical instrument. In addition, a good range of sporting activities, visitors and school trips, including a residential experience for Year 4 pupils, enhances the learning experiences of all pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are extremely well cared for in this school. There is a comprehensive and very well planned whole school approach to care and guidance that is kept under constant review. There are established procedures for child protection and the school makes good use of a wide range of professionals to support pupils with difficulties. All staff know pupils as individuals and work hard and successfully to improve their independence and self esteem. This detailed personal knowledge is increasingly used as part of the developing system of pupil tracking. This has already resulted in a good process of target setting, shared with parents, and will be further enhanced by the current initiatives to refine assessment procedures and improve marking. The school has responded in an exemplary fashion to concerns about some individual behaviour issues. Thorough multi-agency consultations resulted in a very effective and imaginative action plan with an excellent process for recording and analysing incidents to ensure an appropriate response. Parents are extremely supportive of the school and particularly appreciate the efforts to ensure good behaviour and a secure learning environment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. There has been a considerable period of disruption to the leadership with two periods of acting headship. The governors are seeking to make a permanent appointment in the near future. The current acting headteacher is providing effective and energetic leadership. She has worked closely with staff and governors to undertake a thorough and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths that has enabled them correctly to identify areas for development. The resulting school improvement plan clearly outlines strategies for improvement, although it will be difficult to address the number of developments identified in the planned timescale.

The governing body has an excellent understanding of the needs of the school. The leadership they have provided through the period of disruption has been outstanding. They have detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have provided a vital link between acting headteachers, parents and the local authority to establish a coordinated approach to ensuring effective education throughout a very difficult period.

The current leadership of the school has put appropriate management systems in place at all levels enabling the school to move forward, dealing successfully with the issues in the previous inspection and demonstrating clear capacity to continue to improve. The school's finances are extremely well managed and it provides good value for money.

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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	2	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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	2	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	2	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	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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Mrs Alison Higgs

Stamfordham First School

Stamfordham

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Tyne and Wear

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9 February 2006

Dear Children

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I came to your school recently. I'm very grateful for all the help that you gave me in finding out about the school.

I know from what you told me that you like your school. I'm not at all surprised because Stamfordham First School is a good school where everyone works hard to do the best for you. Teaching is good in all of your classes and you make good progress in your learning. I was particularly impressed with how well you can read and the thought that you put into answering questions.

One of the best things about your school is the way that you all get on so well together. The buddies are a really good idea because they make sure that any difficulties are sorted out quickly. I must say that I think you are so lucky to have such superb outdoor areas to play in – I particularly like your fantastic willow structures.

I talked a lot to Mrs Higgs, your teachers and governors and I know that they are going to keep on working to make your school even better. We agreed that when teachers mark your work they will try and give you more advice on how to improve. Also, everyone thinks that it would be a good idea to find a way of letting you have a bigger say in how the school can improve.

Don't forget you go to a really good school where 'Every Child Counts'. You all do well there and you should be very proud to belong to Stamfordham First School.

Thank you again for all your help and the best of luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

David Ford

Lead inspector