



Hexham East First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122203
LEA Northumberland
Inspection number 281190
Inspection dates 9 February 2006 to 10 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Scott

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Type of school | First | School address | Beaufront Avenue |
| School category | Community | | Hexham |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 9 | | Northumberland, NE46 1JD |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01434 603467 |
| Number on roll | 136 | Fax number | 01434 605250 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr Gavin Waugh |
| Date of previous inspection | 1 September 2000 | Headteacher | Mrs Judith Meek |

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|------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized first school in an urban area where socio-economic conditions are broadly average. Virtually all pupils are from white British families and mobility in the local population is lower than average. There is a high number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has a specialist Language Unit for 12 pupils with communication difficulties.

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 a good school that serves its community well. Pupils prosper here and achieve well, because of effective teaching throughout the school. Standards fluctuate but are usually above average. They are not so high this year, because of very high proportions of pupils with learning difficulties in key year groups. The good provision in the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes) means that children make good progress by the time they enter Year 1. Overall, the curriculum is good, but more diversity would help pupils to improve their writing and find out things more for themselves.

During their time at school, pupils develop into confident and considerate individuals. They are very good at working productively on their own and are well prepared for life in the wider world, in their social responsibility and awareness of personal health. Staff care well for the pupils' well-being, are very encouraging and know their pupils very well. Inspectors understand why pupils say that they enjoy school.

Inspectors judge that the school's evaluation of itself is essentially accurate. The headteacher's thoughtful and decisive leadership has succeeded in strengthening the school's systems and energising teachers. Senior staff and governors are fully involved in the school's development. Priorities for development are appropriate but not based enough on astute analyses of issues and not always applied consistently. Overall, though, the school has made good progress since the last inspection and provides good value for money. As a result, the school is in a strong position to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Offer a richer and more varied curriculum to inspire pupils to write more creatively and give them more opportunities to learn by discovery.
- Ensure that plans to develop the school are based on clear analyses, rigorously carried out and explicitly linked to pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress, mainly achieving the good targets their teachers set for them. The attainment of children when they enter the Nursery is variable. It is generally average, certainly in language and social skills, but sometimes it is below average. In the nursery and reception classes, children achieve well in all areas of learning and usually reach above average standards.

Standards by the end of Year 2 have been high in most years recently. This year, standards are likely to be below average in all main subjects. Although pupils achieve well, including more able pupils, there are many pupils with learning difficulties who do not all reach the expected levels. In addition, last year's unsettled staffing in Year 1 has affected the continuity of their learning.

By Year 4, pupils' attainment is likely to be average this year in reading, mathematics and science. Attainment in writing is not as good and is below expectations. Nevertheless, this represents good achievement overall for this year group because it has an unusually high proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties - about two thirds of the class. Overall, all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the Language Unit, make good progress when measured against their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Inspectors judge this aspect to be good and do not agree with the school's view that it is outstanding. Pupils mostly behave sensibly, work well together and are keen to learn although sometimes in lessons they call out excitedly. Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy school, which helps to explain why attendance is consistently satisfactory or better.

Older pupils in particular learn responsibility, for example, by supporting younger children at lunchtime. The School Council fosters teamwork and a sense of duty, and has been instrumental in deciding on playtime equipment. However, pupils need more scope to collaborate and make decisions for themselves in lessons.

Pupils' moral development is good; they have a mature sense of what is right and wrong. They develop well spiritually through the curriculum and opportunities for reflection. Their cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils readily learn about local and more distant cultures in special events, such as 'One World Week', but there are fewer such chances in everyday lessons.

Pupils are very aware of how to stay healthy by eating wisely. They learn to swim from Year 2 and participate eagerly in sport both during and after school. They develop a good range of skills that they will need in later life, such as a sense of community gained through links with the local Council and churches.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good in all parts of the school, including the Language Unit. Teachers are eager for their pupils to succeed and pupils respond well. Teachers rightly focus on basic skills, explaining new concepts clearly and reinforcing them firmly through good questioning and structured tasks. Lessons are often lively and fun, inspiring pupils to take a full part. A mathematics game on the interactive whiteboard certainly motivated pupils in Year 3 to develop their mental skills.

Mostly, teachers adapt work well to match the needs of all pupils. More able pupils, for example, usually have more demanding tasks to complete. Sometimes, teachers do not set tight deadlines and, therefore, pupils do not achieve as much as they could

in lessons. Occasionally, in whole class activities, questions are not varied enough to involve all pupils fully.

The many support staff and other adult helpers in the school play an important role in pupils' learning. With individual pupils or groups, especially pupils with learning difficulties, these adults are sensitive and guide learning well. Occasionally, though, they are not active enough in whole class activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Teachers provide well for the individual needs of pupils, including those who find learning difficult or who have communication difficulties. The provision in the Foundation Stage comprises a healthy blend of guided and independent activity. The overall curriculum in the school is broad and balanced with a sensible focus on basic skills. However, the school is aware that these skills, particularly writing, are not developed well enough in other subjects. The opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through independent problem-solving and discovery are also limited.

The curriculum is boosted by interesting activities, such as after school clubs, themed weeks and learning another language. Learning is also enhanced by visitors to the school and visits to places of interest, but teachers recognise that there are too few of these and are planning more. Pupils' personal development, particularly their health and safety, is effectively promoted.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Inspectors judge this aspect to be good and not outstanding, as the school believes. Pupils appreciate the good level of pastoral care and support, and feel secure. They trust staff because they are positive and encouraging. They know there is always someone to talk to or they can use the 'concern box' if they are upset. Bullying is extremely rare but pupils say incidents are dealt with quickly and fairly.

Child protection procedures are in place and well understood by staff. Health and safety take a high priority. There are strong links with outside agencies, other schools and parents which support pupils when they begin or leave school, or if they have specific needs.

The school has a thorough system of checking pupils' progress in their work. Teachers use information from this well to set pupils challenging targets that are regularly updated. These, together with helpful marking, help to guide learning and ensure that pupils make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with parents that the school is well led and managed. Good leadership by the headteacher, well supported by senior colleagues, ensures that the school has a warm and positive atmosphere with a strong focus on pupils' achievement as well as their personal development. The open style of leadership means that all staff feel valued and involved, and parents' views are important and acted upon promptly.

The school knows itself well. The headteacher, in particular, has a good view of strengths and what could be improved, like writing. Information is sensibly gathered by, for example, good monitoring of teaching and so teachers are aware of how their teaching could improve. The school's priorities are appropriate but its plans for development are not overtly linked to pupils' achievement nor based on a detailed analysis of weaknesses. As a result, subsequent actions are not always sharply defined or scrupulously carried out.

Governance is good. Governors are supportive, well informed and active in the school's development. They discuss issues vigorously and hold the school to account when necessary. Parents think very well of the school and particularly appreciate the quality of teaching, care by, and approachability of, staff.

The school has developed well in recent years. Key issues from the last inspection have been addressed effectively, and new useful initiatives have been successfully embraced by teachers. In addition, staff have been thoughtfully re-deployed to make the most of their skills. Therefore, the school is well placed to improve further and provides good value for money.

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 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

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? | 2 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 3 | 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? | 2 | 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 | 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

Alexandra House

33 Kingsway

London

WC2B 6SE

T 0207 421 6800

F 0207 421 6707

Ofsted helpline

08456 404045

Hexham East First School

Beaufront Avenue

Hexham

Northumberland

NE46 1JD

10 February 2006

Dear Children

Ms Waugh and I thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school, and meeting you and your teachers. Thank you very much for all your comments and help around the school. Like you, we believe that yours is a good school because:

you work hard and do well in your work

you behave well, get on happily with one another and have a good sense of responsibility

your teachers are good at teaching you important skills

the adults in the school take good care of you and make sure you are healthy and safe

your headteacher has the right ideas to improve the school further.

However, your school could be better if:

teachers gave you more help with your writing and more chance to learn through discovery

all plans for the school are clearer and carried out fully.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Additional Inspector