



# Mickley First School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 122219  
**LEA** Northumberland  
**Inspection number** 281195  
**Inspection dates** 7 November 2005 to 8 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Andrew Scott

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	West Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Mickley Square
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 9		Stocksfield, Northumberland
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01661 842269
<b>Number on roll</b>	51	<b>Fax number</b>	01661 842269
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	N/A
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 July 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Anne Elvidge

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 9	<b>Inspection dates</b> 7 November 2005 - 8 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 281195
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

## Description of the school

This is small village school serving an area with higher than average socio-economic conditions. Virtually all pupils are from white British families. The pupil population is more fluid than is typical; in the current Year 3, for example, half of the pupils started school after the reception year. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly average.

## 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 provides its pupils with an effective education. The school's own findings match this judgement. It has a happy, supportive and well-focused atmosphere in which pupils feel inspired to work. Children enter school with average knowledge and skills, and quality and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. Pupils achieve well as they pass through the school because of good teaching overall. However, in the less effective teaching, work is not always matched accurately to pupils' varying needs, particularly for more able pupils. By Year 4, they attain standards that are above average, especially in reading and mathematics. Their skills in writing are not quite so good, especially those of boys, but, nevertheless, are average for pupils of their age. Pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress, as do more able pupils, although these pupils would benefit from more scope for independent learning. Pupils' personal development is good; indeed, their social development is outstanding. They are very comfortable with one another and adults, and they are very responsible and considerate in and out of class. Pupils enjoy their learning and rightly believe that they work hard most of the time. They appreciate that teachers show them how to improve their work and they feel secure in school because there are effective systems for ensuring their safety. Consequently, pupils behave well. The good curriculum meets the needs of the pupils and is enhanced by interesting visits, visitors and special activities. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher. Her thoughtful and sensible vision for the school motivates colleagues and pupils alike, and the ideas for improvement are good, although not always precisely defined. Governors are supportive of the school but have not recently been able to play a full role in its development. The school has made good progress since the last inspection, and is well positioned to improve further. As a result, the school offers good value for money.

not applicable

### What the school should do to improve further

- improve standards in pupils' writing by exploring further ways to motivate boys and by enabling pupils to write in a more organised way
- ensure that teaching is consistently good by matching work more closely to pupils' individual needs, especially more able pupils
- strengthen the development of the school through more sharply defined action plans and more regular involvement by the governors

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. This differs from the school's judgement of satisfactory achievement. Standards in speaking, listening and in some aspects of information and communication technology (ICT) are good. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well because they have good, focused support. Pupils are on target to reach even

higher standards in Years 2 and 4 in 2006. The school confidently expects that they will achieve above average standards in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing are satisfactory throughout the school, not better, because pupils, especially boys, do not structure their expression skilfully enough. More able pupils achieve well but could achieve better with more consistently challenging work.

Achievement in the reception class last year was satisfactory and most children achieved their expected goals. They made especially good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world and their personal development. The school expects that this year many children will exceed their goals.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils say that they enjoy school. The high level of attendance demonstrates this, together with their good concentration and eagerness to acquire new knowledge and skills in lessons. Behaviour is very good, with only occasional incidents of over-exuberance and pupils say that there is no bullying. Pupils' social skills are outstanding. They get on extremely well together, quietly supporting one another when work is tricky in lessons, or making sure no-one is lonely at playtimes. They relate confidently to adults, and hold interesting and relevant conversations. Pupils benefit from special cultural activities, such as a science-based pantomime, and appreciate other cultures through visits, displays and their study of different religions. Consequently, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Pupils rightly say that they feel safe at school. They know that they can always turn to an adult in case of need, and visits from the police and fire service reinforce their awareness of personal safety. Pupils learn to swim at an early age, because of parents' requests in view of the proximity of a local river. There is sufficient time for physical education but there is no extra sport after school at present.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Inspection findings agree with the school's judgement that teaching and learning are good overall. In all classrooms, there is a healthy buzz of activity because teachers provide interesting lessons and generate a good rapport with their pupils. As a consequence, pupils concentrate hard and behave sensibly. Teachers present new learning clearly and make it clear what pupils are expected to learn, so that pupils readily understand new concepts.

Teachers are skilful at advising pupils how to improve and at praising genuine effort. This has a very positive impact on pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Resources are used thoughtfully to motivate pupils and reinforce learning. Teaching assistants are good at guiding and supporting pupils who are less secure, especially pupils with learning difficulties.

There is good teaching in all parts of the school. However, sometimes, especially in Years 3 and 4 but also elsewhere, teaching is only satisfactory because teachers do not challenge all pupils consistently highly enough. More able pupils, in particular, do not systematically receive work that extends them fully, and so their pace of progress is not always as swift as it might be. In addition, teachers are not wholly successful in helping pupils to structure their writing and in motivating boys to be as good as girls.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is right to think that the curriculum is good. There is a strong structure for each subject which allows for flexibility. In this way, teachers can modify their teaching to take advantage of good opportunities such as music workshops. The curriculum is enriched well through visits, visitors and weekly skills development sessions which focus on such diverse activities as cooking, textiles and tag rugby. There are no activities after school at present but there are usually some, which pupils say they enjoy.

Teachers succeed in strengthening pupils' basic skills across different subjects. In a Year 3/4 science investigation, for example, pupils had to devise ways to stop an ice sculpture melting. Mathematical graphs are used to display such findings. The curriculum is designed well to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties, for instance, are timetabled to work with a teaching assistant in short bursts of intensive activity on perceived areas of weakness.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspection findings confirm the school's view that it provides a good level of care, guidance and support for its pupils. Systems for ensuring pupils' safety are thorough and there are regular checks to make certain that all risks are covered. Pupils themselves feel secure and have implicit trust in adults at the school. Staff constantly discuss the needs of all pupils so that individual concerns are dealt with promptly and sympathetically. The school works closely with outside agencies to seek extra help when necessary. The school nurse is a frequent visitor, checking on vulnerable pupils, as well as promoting issues such as healthy eating.

The school is good at monitoring pupils' progress. Twice yearly, teachers assess progress in reading, writing and mathematics and use the data well to influence teachers' planning. Pupils do not have formal targets for improvement in these subjects, but are kept well aware of what they have to do to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school correctly considers its leadership and management to be good overall. The leadership by the headteacher is good. She knows her school inside out. She has a thoughtful, pragmatic approach to education that puts pupils first, with proper emphasis

on achievement as well as broader experiences. She leads by example and works closely with her new colleagues so that they share her thinking, aspirations and desire to improve further.

The priorities for developing the school are good, and respond suitably to areas of concern, such as the quality of writing. Most of the aims are met each year but, with wholesale staff changes within the past year, the school has understandably not achieved all of these. The current aims are clear and appropriate, but plans for action are not based on careful analysis nor do they specify precisely what staff need to do to effect improvements.

Over the past year, governors have not been able to play a full part in checking the school's progress. Recruitment of governors has been difficult and there has been no chairperson. As a result, not enough time has been spent ensuring that the school is developing appropriately in, for example, subject areas. However, governors do work hard for the school and give valuable support in aspects such as health and safety. Governance is satisfactory overall.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. The key issues have been addressed and teaching, behaviour, care for pupils and their personal development have all improved. The school, therefore, is in good shape to improve further.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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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NE43 7BG

11 November 2005

Dear Children,

Thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school. I very much enjoyed meeting you and getting to know your school.

I agree with you that yours is a good school, because:

you get on extremely well with one another and with adults in and out of lessons

you are well behaved, thoughtful and responsible, and are good at carrying out your jobs

your headteacher has the right ideas to make your school better; she makes sure that you learn the right things as well as opening your eyes to the outside world

your teachers help you to make good progress in your work; you do especially well in reading and mathematics

the school takes good care of you and you have rightly said that you feel safe at school

you clearly like coming to school because your attendance is good.

However, we feel that the school could still improve in three ways.

Your writing could be better, if teachers chose more interesting topics for boys and gave pupils who are good at English more chance to write freely.

Your work in all subjects could be even better, if teachers made sure that in lessons you were really made to think hard.

Your headteacher and governors need to be clearer in their plans to improve the school.

I wish your school every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Scott All Lead Inspector

Annex B