



Shilbottle First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122238
LEA
Inspection number 281200
Inspection dates 4 July 2006 to 5 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick

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

Type of school	First	School address	Shilbottle Grange
School category	Community		Shilbottle
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		Alnwick, Northumberland
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01665 575285
Number on roll	110	Fax number	01665 575285
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Bob Wade
Date of previous inspection	1 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Angela Jefferies

Age group 4 to 9	Inspection dates 4 July 2006 - 5 July 2006	Inspection number 281200
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small rural school has seen a rapid expansion in its numbers in the last year, due partly to new housing in the village and partly because of the school's very good reputation in the community. Almost all pupils are from a White British heritage, though few pupils speak English as an additional language. The attainment of children when they start school is broadly average. The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is about average and so too is the number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are few pupils with a statement of special educational need, although this represents a higher proportion than average. A new school is to be built on the existing site in the near future to accommodate increasing numbers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. It is a happy, vibrant school that provides pupils with top quality teaching, excellent care and a curriculum that excites and extends them, all of which help the pupils achieve extremely well. The staff constantly challenge and support pupils to do their best. The result is that pupils are confident, well-rounded and take responsibility from an early age. These qualities help them to outstanding levels of achievement and very high standards by Year 2 and Year 4. In the Reception class standards are very high, both in the quality of learning experiences and in children's learning.

The outstanding headteacher has appointed and developed an excellent team of staff, whose commitment to the school's development is evident in the high quality of their work. They are innovative in their approach to continually improving standards; for example, using video to record and refine their assessment of pupils' learning. Parents speak highly of the school. They feel their children are at the centre of all planning, and that they are listened to, 'with courtesy and are supported at every turn.'

The rapid growth of the school has prompted the need for a new building and more staff. Governors have rightly recognised that the headteacher, who carries a heavy teaching commitment, needs time to manage these new developments. The school provides excellent value for money and is very well placed for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Review the headteacher's responsibilities and make appropriate time available to manage the developments proposed for the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding because they make good, and often very good, progress from when they join the Reception class, with broadly average standards, till they leave the school at the end of Year 4 with standards that are significantly above those expected for their age. Children in the Reception class thrive on challenging activities to make good progress and meet the goals set for their learning, and each year a good proportion exceeds them.

Pupils consistently achieve very high standards in reading, writing and mathematics by reaching challenging targets in the national tests at the end of Year 2. This year's results show an improvement on the previous year's and indicate that the school's analysis and response to previous test results has led to an even better performance in mathematics and writing at the higher level. The school has maintained these high standards since the last inspection by meeting the needs of all groups of pupils with good challenge and support to ensure success.

Results in this year's tests show that a high percentage of Year 4 pupils are already reaching the standards expected in Year 6. The progress of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding, because of the care with which their needs are diagnosed and their support planned. The few pupils who have English as an additional language are very well supported to learn alongside their peers and make the same very good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' excellent personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is mainly as a result of their very positive response to all that the school offers. From the minute they arrive at school pupils show an eagerness to take part, take a lead and support their friends in whatever is happening. Children in the Foundation Stage happily leave their parents or carers because they have learned to be confident and independent and tackle learning activities without any adult prompting. Pupils' love of learning is seen in their response to teachers' challenges and the way they listen and join in during lessons. Their love of school is well reflected in their very good attendance. Their excellent behaviour helps to create a calm, harmonious atmosphere where pupils from different races and backgrounds learn and play happily and safely.

Pupils take on many responsibilities which help the school run smoothly and help to improve it. The school council is particularly pleased with its fundraising successes this year through the 'children's marathon', and with improvements to playground toys. Pupils are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about healthy lifestyles and follow the example set by staff to eat sensibly, take plenty of exercise and be sensitive to the feelings of others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding because teachers are committed to getting the best from all pupils. Consistently high quality learning begins with teachers' detailed knowledge of the pupils they teach. They assess their pupils' learning regularly and in fine detail, so that the questions they ask and the tasks they set accurately target what individuals need to learn next. All teachers have excellent questioning skills and know precisely how to develop pupils' thinking through clever questions which allow them to build on each other's ideas.

Teachers' planning takes very good account of how pupils learn and there is plenty of practical activity to reinforce pupils' understanding and skills. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is imaginative and matches well the early learning styles of the youngest children, who relish the many exciting activities that are planned for them.

Pupils say they love lessons because they always know what to do to get things right. Everywhere in the school there is a bustle and buzz of learning as pupils set about working on their own or with a partner to show their teachers how clever they are.

Teachers and teaching assistants work very closely to provide the exact support that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities need. Teaching assistants are skilled and very sensitive to the needs of pupils they support, so that these pupils are able to learn alongside their peers and enjoy success.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The broad and exciting curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides extremely well for the very wide range of pupils' needs. It is well designed and very well planned to respond to the needs of different ability groups as well as individuals. Many parents have commented on how well their children have 'blossomed' because of the experiences they have at this vibrant and happy school. Pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures is very well developed through the rich curriculum, while displays of art and design work show how well the curriculum develops their creative skills.

Opportunities to learn about themselves and relationships are provided by the well planned personal, social and health education programme so that, for example, pupils have plenty of opportunity to explore their feelings about transferring to middle school. Enrichment to learning through visits and visitors and after-school clubs is very good and much appreciated by the pupils. They were spellbound during a recent dance performance by pupils from a local high school and had many questions to ask at the end, demonstrating their eagerness to seize opportunities to learn from all sources.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Arrangements for child protection, health and safety and risk assessment are in place. Pupils' excellent relationships with adults make them feel very safe and they say their teachers will sort out any problems they have. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children feel safe and happy in school. Teachers know their pupils extremely well, both personally and academically and they match support to the needs of every child. Pupils are involved well in assessing their own learning and that of their peers.

Provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. Their difficulties are quickly spotted through the diligence of staff, and careful assessment of their needs follows swiftly so that they and their parents get the support and advice they need. Very good partnerships with the local authority support services ensure that specialist support is rapidly put in place. Parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are delighted with the quality of support they and their children receive. This high quality care means that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher is determined that all pupils will be supported to do the best they can academically and personally. The school's consistent high performance in national tests indicates the success of this vision. The headteacher sets very high standards in the quality of her work and her example is followed by all staff, who fully share her vision for pupils' learning. All staff are well trained for the work they do; their excellent teamwork and dedication to continually improving their practice mean that effective and innovative teaching methods are constantly being shared for the benefit of all pupils.

The school's excellent self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate in identifying what the school should do next to improve, as the very good improvement since the last inspection demonstrates. The headteacher gives an excellent lead in analysing pupils' progress and test performance so that any slippage in learning is quickly picked up and corrected. Her heavy teaching load means she does not have the time to manage the significant expansion in school numbers.

Governors play a significant role in the development of the school. They have a good knowledge of the quality of its work and give good support to the headteacher and staff. Parents are pleased to be consulted about their views of the school and pleased, too, that their suggestions are acted upon whenever practical. The school has a very good capacity to improve even 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>	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	1	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	1	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	1	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?	1	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	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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The Pupils

Shilbottle First School

Shilbottle Grange

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Alnwick

Northumberland

NE66 2XQ

4 July 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school a few weeks ago. You have a lovely school and certainly enjoy yourselves there very much. It was good to see you working so hard and learning so fast. You really are very clever at so many things. No wonder your parents and teachers are proud of you! I liked seeing so many of you helping each other in class and in the playground. You have very kind and caring attitudes, which help make your school such a happy place to be.

The school council told me about your fantastic fundraising for children who are very poorly. Taking part in the 'children's marathon' was an excellent idea and you have all tried very hard to care for people who need help. Well done!

I really enjoyed your achievement assembly, especially the part where buddies and the football managers could give out awards to children. I thought this was such a lovely idea I might share it with other schools. I also thought that you all deserve a good holiday after working so hard all through the year. I hope you have a lovely break and that there is plenty of sunshine for you to play out.

Best wishes for next year.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead Inspector