



Stobhillgate First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122246
LEA Northumberland
Inspection number 281203
Inspection dates 4 April 2006 to 5 April 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Scott

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

Type of school	First	School address	Stobhillgate
School category	Community		Morpeth
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		Northumberland, NE61 2HA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01670 513382
Number on roll	204	Fax number	01670 517 591
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Cllr Adrian Slassor
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Neil Richmond

Age group 3 to 9	Inspection dates 4 April 2006 - 5 April 2006	Inspection number 281203
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized first school serves a residential area on the southern fringe of Morpeth. Pupils come from average social and economic backgrounds. They are predominantly from white British families; there are a few pupils whose first language is not English. The movement within the pupil population is quite low and there are fewer than average pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has won several awards including the Basic Skills Quality Mark and the Artsmark Gold Award.

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 with some outstanding features. This reflects the school's own view. Parents are understandably delighted with the special atmosphere that pervades the school stemming from the excellent attitudes of all staff, especially the headteacher, and the high level of personal care and support for their children. It is also self-evident, therefore, why pupils enjoy their work so much, behave impeccably and mature very well as individuals.

Pupils achieve well and most leave school with standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In the Foundation Stage Nursery and reception classes, the effective provision enables children to make good progress and achieve their learning goals, often exceeding them. Teaching is good throughout the school because teachers enthuse pupils and present new learning skilfully. However, they could do more to make sure that all pupils are consistently challenged to do their best. The curriculum is well focused on the main subjects and outstandingly enriched by a fascinating range of activities.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher's infectious enthusiasm and his enlightened management of colleagues cause all staff to share his values and work effectively as a team. The school knows itself well and has the right priorities but does not ensure that its plans for improvement are astutely based on thorough analyses of issues. Nevertheless, the school has made good progress since the last inspection and is in very good shape to develop further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise expectations of all pupils and match work more closely to their individual needs.
- Be more analytical in planning its development and more rigorous in monitoring its progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties or who have English as an additional language, achieve well as they move through the school. Children begin the nursery class with broadly average skills and knowledge, although this varies from year to year and is often below average in language and mathematical ability. The children achieve well and by the end of the reception year, most will have reached their expected goals and some exceeded them.

By Year 2, pupils usually achieve above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Last year, however, standards fell and were average, mainly because there were more pupils than usual with different specific needs. This year, observation during the inspection suggests standards are likely to be higher reflecting the pupils' good progress.

By Year 4, standards are above average in English and mathematics. Pupils are likely to achieve the targets set by the school at Years 2 and 4, although these could be more challenging. Standards of pupils' work in science and art and design are also above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils love the school and fully appreciate what staff provide for them. They are enthusiastic about their work and participate wholeheartedly in lessons. They work exceptionally well together and value one another's opinions, as well as working equally reliably on their own. Behaviour is excellent in and out of lessons. Pupils say that behaviour is not perfect but they are wise enough to know that this is not realistic.

Pupils are very responsible individuals. Older pupils, for instance, take great care of younger children at break-times. Pupils are increasingly living a very healthy lifestyle through regular exercise and a sensible diet. Excellent links with the community include a weekly lunch date with some elderly local residents who think the pupils are 'great'. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is extremely good because of the wealth of exciting opportunities available to them. Attendance rates are above average and the school is working effectively with families to improve them further.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Relationships between teachers and pupils are outstanding and so classrooms are happy and productive environments. Teachers are skilful at motivating pupils by, for example, varying the complexity of questions, ensuring a brisk pace and praising all contributions adeptly. As a result, pupils are very eager to learn, sustain very good concentration and are able to work responsibly on their own, even in the nursery class.

Teachers present new learning clearly, reinforced by effective resources such as the toy animals that aided counting in a reception lesson. They liaise closely with teaching assistants so that pupils with learning difficulties, in particular, benefit from close support in group work. However, there is not always enough direct support for individuals during whole class activities.

Teachers assess pupils' progress well and generally vary work according to their capabilities. For example, pupils with learning difficulties benefit from more structured work. However, teachers do not consistently expect enough from the pupils or set work that is sufficiently challenging for them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Inspectors judge the curriculum to be good and not outstanding as the school believes. There are many strengths in the curriculum including a strong focus on literacy and numeracy and their development through other subjects. Other subjects are not neglected and pupils have ample time for information and communication technology and physical education, for example. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language.

The main strength of the curriculum is the outstanding range and variety of extra activities, workshops and themed days that enrich pupils' learning. During the inspection, for example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 successfully staged a clothes show that neatly brought together design, music, history and English. Other activities have included African singing, Blue Planet Day and clog-dancing. In addition, the school places a high priority on developing pupils' thinking and questioning skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This is an extremely caring school which ensures that each pupil's welfare is very well safeguarded. There are very good systems that underpin the school's approach to issues such as first aid, child protection and risk assessment. However, it is the informal level of care that is especially impressive. The school embodies the essence of the new national agenda that 'every child matters'. Pupils know that all adults have their best interests at heart and so feel highly valued and very secure.

Teachers give good guidance to support pupils in their work. A well-organised system enables teachers to keep a regular check on pupils' progress and to set targets for improvement. Some teachers are very skilled at highlighting, in their marking of work, how pupils can improve but this excellent practice is not consistent throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The enthusiastic and sensitive leadership by the headteacher ensures that the school has a delightful atmosphere, greatly appreciated by pupils and parents alike. He has introduced a sense of fun, many exciting activities and a very sensible philosophy of education that is endorsed and shared by all staff. Senior staff work closely and effectively together to help the school progress and ensure that subjects and aspects, such as science and the Foundation Stage, develop well.

The school is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher, senior staff and governors regularly check and evaluate key aspects of the school, such as pupils' progress. However, the school is not incisive enough in analysing any areas of concern so that actions to bring about improvement can be initiated.

Parents value the communication with school and know that their views matter. They know their children thrive at school and, as a result, the school is very popular. Governance is good. Governors are well involved in the school's development but could strengthen their knowledge of its work through focused visits. Partnerships with other agencies are excellent at supporting pupils with specific needs and broadening the horizons of all pupils.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. All the key issues have been well addressed, standards have been maintained and there have been clear improvements, inspired by the headteacher, in the curriculum, care of pupils and their personal development. The school absorbs new initiatives thoughtfully and its priorities are good. As a result, the school is well placed 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?	2	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	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?	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	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	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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Mr Neil Richmond

Stobhillgate First School

Stobhillgate

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NE61 2HA

4 April 2006

Dear children

Mr Goodchild 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 your school gives you a good education, because:

the school has an excellent atmosphere in which everyone cares for one another so that you are happy, healthy and safe

you behave extremely well and have excellent attitudes to your work

you are very responsible and kind individuals

teachers make lessons fun and encourage you to work hard

you benefit from some very exciting activities throughout the year

your headteacher, helped by all staff, has made this school a special place and has the right ideas to make it even better.

However, your school could be even better if:

teachers give you work that is always challenging: not too easy yet not too hard

the plans to improve the school are clearer and more detailed.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Additional Inspector