



Hipsburn First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122264
LEA Northumberland
Inspection number 281208
Inspection dates 2 May 2006 to 3 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Margerison

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

Type of school	First	School address	Lesbury
School category	Community		Alnwick
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		Northumberland NE66 3PX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01665 830210
Number on roll	62	Fax number	01665 830210
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Roger Styring
Date of previous inspection	1 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Dot Charlton

Age group 4 to 9	Inspection dates 2 May 2006 - 3 May 2006	Inspection number 281208
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Hipsburn First School is a smaller than average school situated near Alnwick in Northumberland. Most pupils come from the villages of Lesbury and Alnmouth, but a few parents choose to bring their children to the school from other neighbouring villages. Children start school with standards broadly typical for their age, although this varies from year to year. Most pupils are white British. A few are from other ethnic backgrounds and very few are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The area is socio-economically above average and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspection evidence fully supports the school's view that it is a good school with some outstanding features. Due to innovative and forward-looking leadership by the headteacher, the school has built well on the strengths identified at the last inspection. It provides good value for money. Teaching and learning, based on high expectations and respect for the individual, is good in all classes. As a result, pupils achieve well and reach above average standards. Pupils learning English as an additional language are very well supported so they make rapid progress relative to their starting point. Pupils' personal development is good and they are very involved in the day-to-day running of the school. As a result, they make an excellent contribution to its development. However, there are a few parents who take their children out of school during term time so that attendance this year is below average. The curriculum is good and provides pupils with plenty of opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and become confident, independent learners. They learn how to use their basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in different situations well. However, there is scope for more able pupils to practise using the full range of their writing skills in all subjects. The provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding; pupils get a very good start to their education and by the end of Reception, they all reach at least the standards expected, with a good proportion exceeding them. The school has developed very strong links with the playgroup and other external organisations, which make a major contribution to the range of opportunities provided for pupils. Overall, very strong teamwork between staff, governors, pupils and most parents is a key feature of the school, which means that it is in a strong position to continue to move forward.

not applicable

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing by providing more opportunities for more able pupils to use their writing skills in all subjects.
- Raise levels of attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well and make good progress. In the Foundation Stage pupils make very good progress overall, and in aspects of their language and literacy, mathematical development and personal and social skills, progress is excellent. As a result, virtually all the pupils are on course to reach the early learning goals in all areas of learning, with a good proportion exceeding these levels. In the 2005 national tests for pupils in Year 2, the school's results overall were above average, as they have been in three of the last five years. However, they were slightly better in reading and mathematics than in writing because a higher proportion of pupils reached the expected levels and

above. The school has correctly identified that aspects of pupils' writing is an area needing improvement. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress so that currently, standards overall in Year 2 are above average.

- In Years 3 and 4, the strong emphasis placed by teachers on giving pupils plenty of opportunities to work on their own and in groups, on practical and investigative activities, results in them continuing to make good progress. As a result, standards are above average in speaking and listening, reading, mathematics, science and ICT. Standards in writing are broadly average, but pupils' factual and report writing skills are good. Pupils learning English as an additional language make excellent progress due to the very effective teaching and excellent support they receive in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The school celebrates the achievements of pupils and helps them learn to value the skills, backgrounds and attributes of others. Most parents say their children really enjoy school, and this is reflected in their enthusiasm in lessons, positive attitudes and keenness to take part in whatever is provided for them. However, attendance is below average this year due to a small, but increasing, number of parents who insist on taking their children out of school during term time. Pupils learn how to stay safe, and have an excellent understanding of living a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community through the school council and the wide range of other opportunities they are given to take responsibility around the school. One notable feature of the school is the way that pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and to challenge adults in a positive way if they are not convinced about the purpose of an activity. Although this occasionally results in a few pupils behaving with an apparent lack of courtesy to others, overall behaviour is good. Pupils' confidence to express their own views is, on balance, a strength of their personal development and, coupled with their good basic skills, prepares them well for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good in all classes, which is reflected in the standards the school has achieved in recent years, despite variations in the ability of different cohorts and relatively small numbers of pupils in each year group. A key feature of the teaching in all classes is the excellent use of open-ended questions asked by teachers to challenge pupils of all abilities and to check their learning. The information that teachers gain from this approach is used well to provide activities that are generally well matched to pupils of different abilities and ages. Teachers' management of lessons is also

excellent. Whole-school approaches to managing behaviour are consistently applied and clear targets are set at the start of lessons so pupils know exactly what is expected of them at all times. As a result of these factors, lessons are brisk and are positive learning experiences. Teachers use themes from other subjects such as science, history and geography well to provide a focus for activities in English and mathematics lessons, but there is scope for more able pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall and is excellent in the Foundation Stage, where it provides all pupils with a wealth of experiences, in and out of the classroom, which develops their skills well in all the areas of learning. In Years 1 to 4, the curriculum is broad, coherent, practical and relevant to pupils. As a result, pupils' basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are developed well. The curriculum is enhanced well by visits out of, and visitors into the school and teachers use these experiences well in their planning of lessons. The school also uses the rich heritage of the village effectively in many subjects, which makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development. The school makes very good use of its extensive links with other schools and the local school cluster to provide specialist teaching of music, dance, and coaching in different sports. The school recently established daily after-school care for pupils, but it has recognised that there are opportunities to provide more extended activities for pupils, and is very involved in the local school partnership which is developing these services.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect of the school's work is good. Procedures for ensuring the health and safety and welfare of pupils are outstanding. As a result, parents are very confident that their children are well cared for, and that any concerns or problems will be brought to their attention immediately and dealt with effectively. Procedures to promote attendance are effective in most cases, but there is scope for the school to be more rigorous in its dealings with the few parents who take their children out of school during term time. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and so make good progress. Pupils and parents with English as an additional language benefit from excellent support and are fully involved in the school's activities. Procedures to track the progress pupils are making and to involve them in setting targets for learning are thorough, and pupils know what they are aiming to achieve. The school's outstanding links with the on-site playschool and with other schools means that pupils are very well prepared for starting school and for moving on at the end of Year 4.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher is an excellent role model and is the chief architect of the ethos of the school. This is founded on respect for the

individual and the belief that each person, pupil, parent or staff member should be given the opportunities they need in order to fulfil their potential. All stakeholders are involved in evaluating the work of the school and establishing priorities for improvement. Governors are extremely supportive of the school and have systematic procedures in place to evaluate its work. As a result, the school knows itself well, and its development planning is very clearly focused on raising standards and improving the provision for pupils. New initiatives are implemented effectively by those who take responsibility for them, but the school is working on using data more effectively to evaluate their effect on pupils' learning. Overall, due to the very strong teamwork between governors, staff, pupils and parents, the school is well placed to build further on its many strengths.

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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	1	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	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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?	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	1	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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The Children

Hipsburn First School

Lesbury

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Northumberland

NE66 3PX

3 May 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school this week. You are justifiably proud of your school and helped me tremendously. I would particularly like to thank the school council and a pupil in Year 1 for explaining their work to me. I also felt very privileged to see the precious mementos of Poland in Year 2.

Overall, I agree with you, your parents, the staff and governors that you go to a good school. I was particularly impressed by the progress you make and the standards of your work in mathematics, science, speaking, listening and reading. I was also impressed with your understanding of how important it is to keep fit and to lead a healthy lifestyle. You also make a very important contribution to the running of your school. This is because you are taught well and the teachers give you plenty of opportunities to contribute your ideas in lessons and through the school council.

I have asked Mrs Charlton and the governors to make sure that there are more activities in all subjects for you to practise your writing skills, and to improve the school's attendance figures, which are below the national average this year.

Thank you again for your help and good wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Andy Margerison

Lead Inspector