



Whinfield Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134719
LEA Darlington
Inspection number 282659
Inspection dates 18 May 2006 to 19 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Scott

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Augusta Close
School category	Community		Darlington
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		County Durham DL1 3HT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01325 240499
Number on roll	598	Fax number	01325 240755
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Jeremy Horner
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Sheila Williams

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very large primary school, formed following the amalgamation of an infant and a junior school in 2004. It serves an urban area of average socio-economic conditions and virtually all pupils are from white British families. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly 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

Whinfield Primary is a good school. Understandably, it has taken the school some time to re-adjust since its amalgamation. However, the good leadership of the headteacher, well supported by governors, has succeeded in maintaining a positive ethos and good standards, and in making the necessary changes to staffing and systems over the past two years. As a result, the school provides good value for money and is in a good position to improve further.

Standards are above average, and pupils achieve well in all the main subjects. Children benefit from good provision in the Reception year, make good progress and mostly exceed the goals expected of them. Pupils continue to progress well as they move through the school. Teaching and learning are effective because teachers mostly have high expectations of pupils and ensure a brisk pace to lessons. However, teaching is not consistently good in every classroom. In addition, teachers do not always give pupils clear enough advice about how to improve their work.

Pupils enjoy their work, behave well and respect each other. They rightly feel safe, well cared for and secure at school, and they play a full part in influencing the school's progress. The well-structured curriculum ensures that key skills are acquired well, and pupils benefit from an exciting variety of activities and visits. Parents appreciate the quality of education, support their children's learning well and are increasingly involved in the school's work. The school has a satisfactory view of its own progress. Its priorities are sensible and money is shrewdly spent. However, it is not rigorous enough in its monitoring to ensure that all its action plans are sharply focused on areas for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching so that pupils experience high expectations and a brisk pace in every lesson.
- Use assessment data more skilfully to set helpful targets so that pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve.
- Be more rigorous in monitoring what goes on in the school and more precise when specifying areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well. This judgement differs from the school's view that achievement is satisfactory. The school did not take full account of pupils' overall progress because it based its judgement reasonably on the official data that show progress between Years 2 and 6.

Children enter the Reception year with average abilities, make good progress and exceed expectations in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils continue to make good progress through the school. Last year, standards were above

average in all the main subjects by both Year 2 and Year 6. The school identified concerns about achievement by more able pupils in writing in Year 2 and in mathematical problem-solving by Year 6. It took successful action to improve achievement in these areas. Inspection findings agree with teachers' assessments that standards remain above average in the current Years 2 and 6. This is especially creditable in Year 6, where the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than usual.

The school is proud of pupils' attainment in information and communication technology (ICT), and also in art and design. Judging from work on display and in lessons, the school is right to believe that standards are better than average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, not outstanding as the school believes. Certainly, pupils enjoy school and their attendance is satisfactory. They behave well, are attentive and respond positively in class. They appreciate the many exciting opportunities available. Many happily recalled their pleasure, for example, at taking part in events such the Victorian school day and theatre visits. Such activities greatly enhance their learning and reinforce the excellent relationships throughout the school.

Pupils make a good contribution to their community. The school council is a delightful group which plays an influential role in school life, for example by fostering the 'friendship bench' in the playground. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They know about and respect other people's lifestyles and other cultures through, for instance, an Indian day and a workshop on Aboriginal art. Pupils feel safe and are well aware of how to live healthily. They take full advantage of the many physical activities on offer and enjoy the healthy options on the lunch menu. Pupils are also sensitive to local environmental issues and have set up 'eco-teams' in response to their concerns. They support many charities. Good academic and social skills, together with quiet self-confidence, mean that pupils are prepared well for their future education and lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. In most classrooms, teachers create a positive atmosphere, present new learning clearly and encourage pupils to play a full part, often through good questioning. They plan work sensibly with colleagues to ensure that all pupils in each year group have similar work. Teaching assistants work sensitively with pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities to provide emotional support and help in understanding work. Teachers often give good advice when marking

work so pupils are clear about how to improve their work. However, this practice is not consistent throughout the school.

Most teachers have high expectations and set challenging work, and lessons have a lively pace. As a result, pupils are very focused and work energetically and productively. Teachers often provide a healthy balance of direct teaching and independent learning. For example, in a Year 6 ICT lesson, the teacher gave pupils excellent advice but expected them to untangle for themselves the tricky problems involved in constructing a robot buggy. Such good teaching is the norm in the reception classes but is not always apparent elsewhere. Sometimes, lessons involve too much routine activity, and the pace of learning is not swift enough to motivate pupils fully, so their concentration flags.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, with a strong focus on literacy, numeracy, science and ICT, so that pupils mostly acquire key skills well. Astute planning and an extensive array of books, for instance, have had a positive impact on the standards of reading. However, the school rightly recognises that it could do more to promote these key skills across the curriculum. The school provides very good opportunities to enrich pupils' experiences through a variety of clubs, special activities and visits, such as a Tudor day and a glass workshop.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, particularly by teaching assistants and through effective learning plans. The school is beginning to provide similarly for pupils with special gifts or talents. The provision in the reception classes is good because children's individual needs are well met and children have ample scope to learn through discovery. The school is keen to develop pupils' independent learning more at every stage.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Although the level of care of pupils is good, it is not outstanding as the school believes. There is certainly a strong emphasis on promoting the pupils' well-being, through robust health and safety systems, risk assessments and child- protection procedures. Pupils say that they feel safe and can turn to an adult in confidence if they need help or advice. They are given good opportunities to take responsibility, for example, as playground friends, as members of the school council and as SPOTS (special pupils on trust).

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and given constructive individual help by teachers and teaching assistants. The work of all pupils is usually marked carefully, and the constructive comments made by most teachers give learners useful advice on how to improve their work. However, assessment data is not yet used skilfully by all teachers to give all pupils consistently challenging targets.

Regular reports and parents' evenings keep parents well informed about their children's progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school modestly assesses leadership and management as satisfactory, but inspectors judge them to be good. The headteacher's calm, firm and sensible leadership has ensured the successful amalgamation of two schools and created a common sense of purpose amongst staff. A good climate for learning has been established and parents say that they are very satisfied with the education the school provides. Good links with partner schools, the local church and outside agencies all enhance pupils' learning.

Self-evaluation is currently satisfactory. The school is keen to appoint additional senior teachers to strengthen the management, monitoring and assessment of its work. At present, the school is not rigorous enough in dealing with issues to make sure that its provision is wholly consistent. Good systems for tracking progress have been introduced, but are not yet fully effective. Resources are deployed well. For example, investment in ICT equipment has allowed teachers and pupils to develop new skills and made lessons more enjoyable. Good use is made of the rather cramped accommodation, which is now being improved.

Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and have supported the headteacher well in identifying the right priorities for improvement. They recognise that the work of building a senior leadership team is not yet complete, but they have effective systems in place to appoint suitably qualified staff.

Whinfield School has maintained above average standards during a period of reorganisation and associated staffing turbulence. It therefore has good capacity for further improvement.

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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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	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	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	3	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

The School Council

Whinfield Primary School

Augusta Close

Darlington

County Durham

DL1 3HT

18 May 2006

Dear Pupils

My colleagues and I enjoyed our visit to your school, and meeting you and all the staff. We would like to thank you for the part you played in helping us to get to know your school.

Like you, we believe your school is a good one. You clearly like lessons, work hard and, as a result, achieve good standards in all subjects. Teachers generally expect you to work hard, and they make lessons exciting and lively and encourage you to play a full part in them. We know that you appreciate the exciting activities and visits that they provide for you.

You get on well with one another and with all the adults in the school. There is a really good atmosphere in the school. Behaviour is not perfect but mostly good, and you look after one another sensibly. You take full advantage of the healthy food and activities that the school offers. Your views are important to the school and help it to improve.

The headteacher has done well to bring your two schools together successfully. All staff work well together and plan improvements with your best interests at heart. However, the school could be even better if all the plans for improvement are clearer, if teaching is good in every lesson and if teachers give you clearer targets to show you how to improve your work.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Lead inspector