

# Northumberland Heath Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 101447               |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Bexley               |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 286063               |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 12–13 September 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | John Laver           |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 3–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 444  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr J Masheder  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs Angela Barry   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 18 November 2002   |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Wheelock Close<br>Northumberland Heath<br>Erith<br>DA8 1JE |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01322 334638   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01322 351543   |

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|--------------------------|----------------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is much larger than the average primary and includes Nursery provision. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and those qualifying for free school meals are above average. The proportions of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and those with English as an additional language are below average. The school serves an area of relative social deprivation.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Northumberland Heath Primary provides a good standard of education, having travelled a long way since the current headteacher joined the school in 2004. Governors and parents refer to her '...having a whirlwind effect'. At the core of the school's work is a determination to focus on the individual needs of all pupils, plus a sustained effort to drive up standards and achievement. Success is evident in the substantial improvements made since the previous inspection. A significant factor is the charismatic and outstanding leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by a strong deputy and leadership team. They evaluate the school's strengths and correctly identify the areas for improvement. Planning is thorough and regularly updated. All staff and an impressive governing body share a commitment to improvement; and they are supported by the enthusiasm that most pupils bring to school.

Attendance remains steadfastly below average, due to a lack of cooperation by a small minority of parents, despite thorough efforts by the school to improve it, with a range of measures such as employing a parent support worker. However, the great majority of pupils are keen learners and enjoy coming to school. They learn well, responding to the impressive personal care they receive from teachers and support staff. They also respond to good teaching, referring to 'fun lessons' in which they learn actively. One such example was seen in a lesson in which pupils worked from computers, in groups, creating imaginative story lines from films previously made. This group cooperation is typical of the pupils' outstanding social and moral development, despite the fact that many pupils join the school with below average skills. Pupils throughout the school are motivated by a wide-ranging curriculum, which includes many enrichment opportunities such as clubs and visits. The school successfully helps pupils develop as polite, cooperative and enthusiastic individuals, and has also improved achievement in recent years. Overall standards are average by the time pupils leave school, but they achieve well in relation to their starting point. However, the standard of writing remains below average. The school is addressing this issue, although targets are used too inconsistently to have a sustained impact on literacy.

Pupils with English as an additional language and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities share in the good progress, benefiting from good personal care and well structured support. There is a small minority of pupils, mostly amongst the more able, who achieve satisfactorily rather than well. This is because, although teaching commonly includes well-paced and interesting approaches, a minority of lessons are only satisfactory, when teachers 'play safe' and over-direct pupils' activities. Sometimes teachers do not set challenging tasks early enough in the lesson to fully engage the minority of pupils who have already mastered the basics. Marking is satisfactory but could support improvement better.

Most parents understandably share their children's enthusiasm for school. One parent summed up the school's success: 'We are very lucky to have the headteacher. She has the ability to motivate the teachers, which in turn motivates the children.'

The school has a good capacity to improve. This is not just down to the relentless drive of the headteacher, but the rest of the leadership team, governors and subject leaders. Subject leaders are fully involved in planning for improvement, monitor effectively and have an impressive capacity to analyse performance data and draw appropriate conclusions. Therefore, they not only support the headteacher well but are themselves 'leaders in waiting'. The quality of the teamwork at all levels not only makes the school a happy place in which to learn, but ensures

a continued commitment to drive up standards and give children the best preparation for the next stage of education and life.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children joining the Nursery and Reception are well below expectations in knowledge and skills, including most aspects of personal and language development. They are taught well in a stimulating, well-planned environment. They make good progress, although still not achieving the standards usually expected at the end of Reception. The school makes supportive links with parents through activities such as home visits and parent workshops. Children soon develop an enthusiasm to learn, are encouraged to be independent, and take their varied responsibilities very seriously. Good leadership ensures that planning and practice take due account of children's individual needs and all areas of learning.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise the achievement of more able pupils by giving them more consistently challenging activities in lessons.
- Improve writing by making better use of marking and assessment.
- Improve the quality of individual learning to foster better communication skills and develop pupils' confidence and independence.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are average and achievement is good, with no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils join the school with below average basic skills. Then, throughout their time in school until the age of eleven, they make good progress. Most rapid progress is made in mathematics and science. English skills are below average, especially in writing. However, overall standards by the ages of both seven and eleven are average. This confirms the 2006 and unvalidated 2007 test results. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with English as an additional language benefit from good support to share in the good progress. A small minority of pupils, mainly more able ones, make satisfactory rather than good progress, because they do not receive a consistently challenging level of work.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils love their school and feel very secure. The school has focused very successfully on improving behaviour. Moral and social development is outstanding: although a minority of pupils lack confidence when working independently, pupils understand how they are expected to behave and how their actions affect others. They proudly accept responsibilities, whether in class or as members of the school council. Support for a wide range of charities and exploration of world issues help to promote a spiritual dimension, an understanding of economic issues and an opportunity to develop important life skills. Pupils have a very well developed understanding of the value of a healthy lifestyle, evident in their discussions about canteen provision. Punctuality has improved and the school works strenuously to improve attendance, but it remains below the national average.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Each classroom celebrates pupils' achievement strongly and has thoughtful and challenging displays such as pupils' artwork. These displays contribute significantly to pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is most often good, characterised by teachers setting high standards of behaviour and ensuring a good level of pace and challenge which leads to good progress and achievement. This keeps pupils engaged and actively involved in learning, for example through paired discussions. In the minority of satisfactory lessons there is sometimes too much teacher direction and talking, and insufficient challenge to a minority of more able pupils who could achieve more.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Class timetables are regularly changed so that all subjects benefit from a concentrated approach, although activities for a minority of more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenging. The school's approach enthuses pupils and results in good learning. The extended school day allows many pupils to enjoy a wide range of sporting, musical and artistic activities. The local secondary school provides valued specialist support for activities such as dance, and master classes for gifted and talented pupils. Pupils enjoy the annual trips which link classroom learning to the world outside school. An annual highlight is the musical production which includes every member of Year 6.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Pupils feel happy, secure and want to learn, because the school provides a caring and inspiring environment. Pupils are confident that they can share problems. Child protection procedures are very secure and the school puts a high priority on individual well-being. Well-organised lunchtimes offer fun and cooperative activities. There are good links with outside support agencies. There is also good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, and for those with English as an additional language. These pupils make good progress, with pupils well involved in their learning. The school is now making better use of assessment information to help improve pupils' work, mainly through class targets, although these are not used consistently.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school's self-evaluation is very accurate. The leadership team and the governing body are very clear how the school can improve further. This awareness results from rigorous monitoring, leading to strategies that have enabled the school to meet appropriately challenging targets, particularly in raising standards and achievement. Staff and other resources are deployed effectively, and all leaders and managers meet the high expectations of the headteacher very well. For example, all of them have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage as well as managing their own areas. Subject leaders'

action planning matches the quality of whole-school planning and is enabling the school to move forward well. Governors provide an outstanding level of knowledge, challenge and support to school leaders, and are actively involved in both classroom and enrichment activities.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|----------------|

### 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   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection  | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?   | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage   | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 2   |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?                                  | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 1   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 1   |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?  | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures?   | No  |
| Does this school require a notice to improve?  | No  |

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Northumberland Heath Primary School, Erith, DA8 1JE

We enjoyed two really good days at your school. We were delighted with how polite and helpful you were to us, and also how enthusiastic you were in telling us about what you thought and what you enjoyed doing.

We know that most of you really enjoy coming to school, and that you like your teachers, most of your lessons and the extra activities like the musical production and the Isle of Wight trip. We agree with your parents that you are well looked after. We were impressed by your good behaviour and the way in which you get on with each other so well. The teachers usually teach you well, and we were pleased with the progress you are making in learning about all sorts of things, such as how to use computers to improve your writing skills. We also know that you need to work hard at improving your writing still further.

We agree with you that the adults in the school do a good job in making sure you do well. Your headteacher works really hard to make the school both a fun place to be and also a place where you learn well. We think you are lucky in having so many good teachers and helpers who do their best to help you in all sorts of ways.

We have asked your teachers to mark your books better. We also want them to sometimes use different ways to get you to improve things like written work, because occasionally some of you find the work quite easy, so you could do even better. We think you should be more confident in talking about your work and working on your own.

Thank you again for our enjoyable visit, well done for getting good results in your work, and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Laver(Lead Inspector)