

Larkspur Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108330
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	288068
Inspection dates	7–8 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Brian Richmond
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Haddock
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2003
School address	Beacon Lough East Gateshead Tyne and Wear NE9 6SS
Telephone number	0191 4875628
Fax number	0191 4877485

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	7–8 June 2007
Inspection number	288068

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school serves a community to the south of Gateshead city centre that experiences very high economic deprivation. Pupils are almost wholly from a White British background. Only a very small minority are at an early stage of learning English. There are more pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than in most schools. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly above the national average. The school has been awarded ArtsMark and ActiveMark in recognition of its work to promote art and sport.

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 that gives excellent value for money. It enjoys extremely high levels of support and confidence from parents as a result of the excellent leadership, high quality of care, support and personal development and the very good achievement of its pupils. Pupils feel safe. They are very happy, especially when engaged in learning, and behave remarkably well. Underpinning the striking personal development are the high levels of care and support the school provides, for example new pupils are given a friendly, helpful welcome. Consequently they quickly find their feet. Pupils enjoy their learning because staff provide an imaginative curriculum that sparks pupils' interest, curiosity and creativity.

Although standards at the end of Year 6 are just above average, overall achievement is excellent; it is outstanding in the Foundation Stage. A large majority of children start school in the Nursery with exceptionally weak listening and speaking skills and few are ready for the demands of school routine. Children settle quickly because staff take time to get to know them and their families before they start school. Children's needs are addressed from the very beginning so that nothing gets in the way of learning. By the time children leave Foundation Stage, they can communicate clearly and are prepared extremely well for the Key Stage 1 curriculum. Assessments at the end of Year 2 show pupils continue to make impressive progress and test results at the end of Year 6 reveal standards marginally above average.

The quality of teaching is excellent and pupils' learning moves along very quickly, especially in the Foundation Stage. Close monitoring of pupils' progress makes certain that any underachievement is quickly spotted and action taken to get pupils back on target. Teachers are given a great deal of professional freedom to use their expertise and the headteacher astutely nurtures their skills to match learning tasks with pupils' individual needs. This results in the teachers being especially well placed to build on pupils' interests and talents and meet their appetite for learning. The school also uses its expertise to train new teachers and support staff, for example, providing the opportunities for parents to acquire accredited skills in order to run pre-school sessions on site.

Parents are quick to acknowledge and praise the high quality of care and support provided for pupils and families. As one parent observed, 'I feel the caring nature of the school has really helped my child progress.' All staff work extremely hard to overcome whatever barrier pupils and families may encounter. A wide range of work is undertaken with outside agencies to provide the right support and expertise. The value of good attendance is well promoted to reduce unauthorised absence.

The school has done well since the last inspection. This is the result of outstanding leadership and remarkable teamwork. Regular and rigorous checking on how well things are going helps refine strategies to constantly move forward. This is done with purpose, but bolstered by a 'crystal clear' vision from the headteacher. A climate has been established in which pupils can thrive. There is a shared determination to ensure that the school provides the best education it can for all its pupils. As a result, the school's capacity to improve is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are satisfactory. Pupils build extremely well on the secure foundation put down in early years. From their exceptionally low starting points, pupils reach standards a little above average at the end of Year 6. School data for the current Year 6 points to continued very good progress and the trend of improvement being maintained. A rigorous focus on listening, speaking, reading and writing is making a considerable contribution to continued improvement. Achievement in subjects across the curriculum is also very good, for example in creative arts. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar and sometimes better progress than their peers as a result of effectively targeted support. The school has been very proactive in its response to changes in the make up of year groups as more pupils with learning difficulties join the school. Resources are very shrewdly targeted to ensure all pupils do as well as they possibly can.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

At the centre of pupils' outstanding personal development is exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they are considerate and cooperative with each other. Pupils' steady growth in maturity and self-esteem is clearly evident in the responsibilities they take on. Displays in classrooms illustrate how much importance the school gives to ensure that all pupils are made to feel special, with many photographs of pupils engaged in activities and examples of their work. Although overall attendance is average, a very large majority of pupils attend well. Members of the school council are proud of their contributions to school life, confidently managing a budget for outdoor play development and the playground buddies scheme. Learning about healthy lifestyles is built into all learning. For example, from their early years children use the outdoor learning areas and grow their own vegetables.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is excellent, particularly in the Foundation Stage. High quality teaching is built on mutual respect and especially high aspirations and expectations for all pupils. Pupils enjoy the challenges that are set for them because teachers and learning support staff work in close partnership to encourage pupils to think for themselves, share ideas and successfully collaborate on group tasks. Creative activities bring life to lessons and ensure a high level of enjoyment, for example, role play integrating North American themes. As a consequence, their communication skills develop quickly. Good humour and endeavour permeate all teaching and learning. Teachers confidently grasp new ideas and are keen to try things out that will make learning even more interesting to boost achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school is too modest in its evaluation of the curriculum. It is outstanding and has been adapted extremely well to meet the needs of pupils, for example, moving from the National Strategy to adopt 'First Steps' to provide an even better match to pupils' communication needs.

This sharp focus on literacy skills has already impacted very positively on pupils' achievement. The curriculum is greatly enriched by threading themes through learning, for example, this year's whole school production of 'Calamity Jane' links pupil writing, Navajo Indians, early settlers and Native American art and textiles. Excellent use is made of visits and visitors to bring life to learning. A wide range of after school clubs is greatly valued by pupils and their parents. Pupils from Year 1 upwards learn French and excellent use is made of sports development programmes run by the nearby specialist secondary school. Personal, social and health education makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development as does the annual Year 6 residential visit to an outdoor centre. All of this helps prepare them exceptionally well for later adult life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Excellent care is provided for all pupils. Procedures to safeguard children including routines for child protection and health and safety are embedded in day to day practice and well understood by staff. Exemplary systems for monitoring of pupils' progress, providing guidance for improvement and setting targets are resulting in pupils doing the very best they can. The need for any extra professional support is identified early and as a consequence, pupils with special educational needs or learning to speak English are catered for really well. Pupils never hesitate to praise the quality of school life. They have no doubts or worries approaching staff on any issue.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The successful 'open door' policy gives parents daily opportunities to be part of their children's education. This is greatly appreciated by parents and far exceeds the expectations of many parents. Staff speak very genuinely of how they are encouraged to share and implement their ideas and pursue ambitions, for example, newly qualified staff who have established themselves very quickly and parents now qualified to support learning. Staff's own professional skill is very closely matched to the needs of the school; evidence of the headteacher's carefully thought out 'grow your own' practice. This has all helped to achieve the significant gains the school has made. Evaluation is accurate and reliable although final judgements are too cautious. Since the last inspection, governors have gained greater confidence and skill holding the school to account and now play a full part in self-evaluation.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

10 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Larkspur Community Primary School, Tyne and Wear,

NE9 6SS

Thank you for the very friendly welcome to your school and for being so considerate, polite and helpful when you met us. We really enjoyed talking to you about your work, speaking with your staff and your parents and joining you in lessons, in the dining hall, during rehearsals and assembly.

What we most liked about your school was:

- the excellent way your headteacher is continually improving your school
- the way you enjoy your lessons, are eager to learn and take pride in your work
- the way your teachers make sure you always do as well as you can
- your excellent behaviour and the way all staff make sure your behaviour is recognised and rewarded
- the high quality of care and support of all staff to help you learn, and listen to any worries and concerns you may have.

Your parents think that this is an excellent school and we agree.

We hope that you will continue to work as hard as you can and do as well as you can so the school can keep on improving.

We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts

Lead inspector