



West Walker Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108485
Local Authority Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number 288114
Inspection dates 5–6 December 2006
Reporting inspector Keith Oglesby

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Church Street
School category	Community		Walker, Newcastle upon Tyne
Age range of pupils	3–11		Tyne and Wear, NE6 3XW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 2624130
Number on roll (school)	201	Fax number	0191 2950019
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Ann Charlton
		Headteacher	Mrs Nichola Draper
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

West Walker is an average sized primary school. It serves a community on the north bank of the River Tyne. There is high unemployment and considerable deprivation. About half the pupils are entitled to free school meals. Only a very small number of pupils are learning English as an additional language, but none is at an early stage. The proportion of pupils identified with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. There is a small 'Additionally Resourced Centre' (ARC) for up to six pupils from other Newcastle schools who find learning difficult in mainstream classes. The school has won the Healthy School and Environment Gold awards.

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. Pupils love coming, behave well and are now making good progress. Leadership and management, at all levels, are good. The school is a calm, caring place where pupils from a range of backgrounds can achieve their potential. This is appreciated by parents. As one put it, 'a very happy and pleasant place for pupils to learn.' The school provides a good range of extra activities to give pupils chances to try new things and succeed.

These good standards of care, and attention to every pupil's well-being, have been a feature for many years. However, pupils' progress in basic skills has not always been as good as it should be. Until last year, attainment of pupils by the age of 11 stayed consistently below, or well below, average. The present leadership team has been responsible for a renewed drive to raise standards. The clearest confirmation of their success came in the 2006 tests, when the results in all subjects jumped to best-ever levels. Current standards show that pupils are continuing to achieve well. They are reaching the standards appropriate for their ages. The exception is writing. Standards here are improving, but the quality, fluency and presentation of independent writing remain below average.

This improvement is mainly due to better assessment and teaching. The school has introduced thorough but manageable systems to keep a careful eye on every pupil's progress. This information is analysed to check on what is working well or where improvements are needed. The school is quick to provide extra support for pupils who are not reaching their targets. These assessment systems are fairly new. Leaders are aware that some fine tuning is needed to make them even more effective.

Assessment information has also had an impact on teaching. It is helping teachers to plan demanding work, based on what each child already knows and understands. Teachers make sure that pupils know how well they are doing, and how to improve. Consequently, nearly all lessons are busy and purposeful, so pupils make clear progress. Most teaching is good, and some is outstanding. In a very small number of lessons, pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Sometimes this is because the pace is too slow, or explanations go on for too long when the class is eager to start working. In the Foundation Stage teaching is outstanding. Children make good progress in all areas of learning. These classes are well managed and equipped. The staff provide good quality care and support so children settle happily.

The school has an accurate, though modest, view of its success. This is because it feels that standards and achievement are not yet as high, or consistent, as they might be. The inspection judgements are higher than the school's in some aspects, because the impact of the school's work on pupils' all-round progress is good and clearly sustainable. As one of the senior team put it, 'There's no going back, we've raised the game now.' All the concerns from the last inspection have been put right. Good leadership, effective teamwork, accurate self-evaluation and high morale mean that the school's capacity to improve further is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and the accuracy of assessment.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Currently, pupils achieve well to reach standards which are broadly in line with the national average. This is particularly the case in mathematics due to consistently good teaching. Standards in writing, although improving, are still below those expected. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress, due to the high quality support which they receive. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is well below the level typical for children of their age. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage but by the time they enter Year 1 standards are below those expected. Progress and achievement in Years 1 to 6 have been variable with standards below or well below the national average since the last inspection. In 2006, the results of the national tests were significantly better than those in 2005 in both key stages. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards were at nationally expected levels. In Key Stage 2, the results showed that standards overall were above the levels expected nationally and the pupils achieved well. Pupils in the ARC also achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of all pupils, including those in the ARC, are good. Pupils are well-behaved, welcoming to visitors and very positive about school. They enjoy learning and make the most of the many experiences that the school offers. As a result the school is a busy but calm place, where pupils can learn to get along with each other, and with adults.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to learn how to take responsibility, such as the playground 'buddies' and the school council. They enjoy these and take duties seriously. Pupils say that there is almost no bullying or harassment, but any incidents are sorted out very quickly. Some recent arrivals described how their nervousness disappeared at once because of the friendly welcome they received. Attendance is a little below the national average, but broadly in line with similar schools in the area. The school makes great efforts to improve this. Its success is reflected in the fact that the great majority of families encourage regular attendance and good punctuality.

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils grow into thoughtful and responsible individuals, sensitive to the needs and beliefs of those who are different. Staff act as good role models in this. Pupils understand the importance of keeping safe and staying healthy. Popular good quality lunches help in this, as well as the arrangements to provide quiet areas in which to enjoy them.

The school makes sure that pupils develop as much self-esteem and confidence as they can. They know that their efforts and achievements are valued and rewarded. This confidence, together with rising standards in basic skills and technology, prepares them well for the next stages of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils say that they are learning new things all the time and improving fast. They enjoy lessons. They appreciate what adults do for them and work hard to please them. Most teaching is at least good and some is outstanding. This is the main reason for pupils' good achievement.

Teachers make most lessons interesting and purposeful. They present new work clearly, using technology well. They keep classes motivated through a range of activities and are quick to praise successes, however small. Teachers plan thoroughly to reinforce and extend basic skills, but also challenge classes to explore and surprise themselves. For example, after one of the popular philosophy lessons, a boy said, 'Teachers get through to you and make you think.'

In a small number of lessons where the quality of teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the urgent emphasis on individual progress was not as evident, sometimes because the pace was a bit slow. Occasionally, explanations go on too long so that pupils do not have enough time to show what they can do. This sometimes affects the quality of writing, when pupils have to stop before they can put together a satisfying and well-presented piece of work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curricular provision is good and has improved since the time of the last inspection. Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities which add to their enjoyment of school and motivate them to learn. This is particularly evident, for example, in the provision of specialist teaching in music and aspects of physical education. This, together with a broad range of exciting visits, clubs, events and guests, supports the school's drive to give pupils lots of chances to succeed. As some pupils put it, 'We do really good stuff here.' There are some valuable links with other institutions, for example the local Technology College.

In the main, teachers plan work which helps pupils to move on, step by step. However there are times, particularly in writing, when the curriculum is not closely enough matched to what pupils need to learn next in order to reach higher standards. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those in the 'ARC' is good, and ensures that these pupils make the progress needed to reach their targets.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Child protection procedures and risk assessments are carried out rigorously. Procedures to safeguard pupils follow the government recommended guidelines. The school has put in place a very effective system for checking how well pupils are progressing, both personally and academically. This means that teachers have the information needed to sharpen their planning and identify who needs additional help or an extra challenge. In the main, teachers use this information well. They encourage pupils to think about their own progress, for example through good marking, agreeing personal targets and end-of-lesson summaries, 'how well have we learned today?' Pupils say that all of this helps. They like to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

All of this, however, is still at an early stage of development and is more effective in some classes and subjects than others. Nevertheless there are clear signs that, where used effectively, this is beginning to contribute significantly to pupils' confidence, good achievement and improving standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management at all levels are good. The headteacher drives school improvement well. She has built on previous strengths and involved everyone in moving the school forward. As a result, there is a strong sense of shared purpose amongst all adults. This is one of the reasons for pupils' positive attitudes and rising standards.

Since the last inspection, senior teachers are becoming more involved and effective in school development. A good example is in mathematics, where good leadership and improved assessment have produced a significant rise in standards. The leadership in the Foundation Stage is also good. The team is not yet complete, as some teachers have only recently taken on responsibilities, and a leader for literacy is about to be appointed.

There are effective systems to keep an eye on the quality of teaching and to see how well pupils are learning. This monitoring has been strengthened by valued support from external agencies.

Planning for improvement is good. The school listens to the views of pupils and parents and responds where possible. It has an accurate and self-critical picture of its strengths and weaknesses, informed by the good new procedures for tracking pupils' progress. The effective and involved team of governors have increased their influence since the last inspection. They support all aspects of the school's work and are keen to make sure the improvements continue.

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Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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 behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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	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

West Walker Primary School

Church Street

Walker

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE6 3XW

7 December 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for all your help when we came to your school. We enjoyed watching you at work in lessons and talking to you. It was good to see both the adults and pupils getting along so well and helping each other.

West Walker is a good school, and it's getting better. You told us it was, and you were right. We think you are all learning well. This is because you listen carefully and work hard, but also of course because the adults work so hard to explain things clearly and help you improve. We liked the ways you are helping yourselves too, for example in thinking about your own targets and what you need to do to get even better.

You are very lucky with all the extra things too, the clubs and sports, the visits and shows, and people such as actors and musicians who work with you. One boy in Year 6 said, 'We do good stuff here.' This is not exactly posh educational language, but we think he summed it up well.

We asked your teachers and Mrs Draper to think about two ways to keep the improvements going. Both are things that they have already been working on. The first is to make sure you keep making good progress in every class, no little rests along the way. Part of this is to keep a careful eye on what you already understand and can do. This way your work should not be too easy, or too hard, but just right. The second thing is to improve your writing even more. We saw some really interesting writing, and we saw some that was beautifully written with good punctuation, and spelling. Next time can we see the two things together more often?

Best wishes

Keith Oglesby, Linda Buller

The inspection team