



Amberley Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108586
Local Authority North Tyneside
Inspection number 288133
Inspection dates 29–30 January 2007
Reporting inspector Stephen Isherwood HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	East Bailey
School category	Community		Killingworth, Newcastle upon Tyne
Age range of pupils	3–11		Tyne and Wear, NE12 6SQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 2008344
Number on roll (school)	325	Fax number	0191 200 8430
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Roger Neilson
		Headteacher	Mrs Alice Barks
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average sized school is situated near the centre of Killingworth, north of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It serves an area that contains both owner-occupied and rented housing. Pupils are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds; all are White British. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school is part of an Education Action Zone and a local network of Primary schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Amberley Primary is a good school with outstanding features and has the capacity to be even better. Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of its effectiveness and judge that it provides good value for money. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching, a broad and stimulating curriculum and the excellent provision for personal, social and health education. This is a bright, vibrant school that extends a warm welcome to everyone. High quality displays on walls and in classrooms are engaging. Pupils' achievements are celebrated with care and pride.

The school places great emphasis on creating a climate where every child is valued and encouraged to grow in confidence and self-esteem. One parent expressed the views of many when she said 'the school is a happy, caring environment, and an excellent place to be'. As a result pupils are enthusiastic in their attendance, feel safe and get on well with each other. Older pupils take good care of younger ones and have many opportunities to air their views and make a difference to school life. Pupils have an outstanding awareness of the importance of keeping fit and eating healthily through the school's extensive range of activities and high quality provision.

Under the drive and enthusiasm of the headteacher, everyone pulls in the same direction and is committed to improvement. Parents are hugely supportive and recognise the high levels of care and the dedication of staff. The school is well thought of in the community and there are good partnerships with other schools and agencies.

Children make good progress from the moment they enter school. This is because of the very strong teaching in the Foundation Stage where every second counts and expectations are high. Curriculum activities and experiences are well planned to capture the interest of learners and enable them to succeed. Teaching in other classes is often good. However, it is weaker in the middle years, resulting in pupils making slower progress than at other stages.

School leaders are not complacent and have identified ways of making management more effective. The school has a clear plan for improvement based on an accurate evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. However, it is not sufficiently focused on the intended outcomes for pupils so that these can be evaluated when the plans have been completed. A lack of rigour by subject leaders in checking and rectifying weaknesses in teaching is holding back the rate of achievement for some pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of teaching and progress in Years 3 to 5 by adding more challenge and interest to lessons.
- Establish more frequent and rigorous checks on the quality of teaching.
- Ensure that developmental plans are sharply focused on outcomes for pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well at Amberley, and the standards they attain are above the national average by the end of Year 6. When children enter the school their attainment is below what is normal for children of this age in terms of their communication and language development. The strong provision in the Foundation Stage means that they make great strides in their learning. By the beginning of Year 1 many reach and often exceed the nationally expected levels for their age. By the end of Year 2, standards are consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Work in lessons and pupils' books confirms that progress is generally good as pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, move through the school to Year 6. Challenging targets for the end-of-key stage national tests are generally met. Progress during the earlier years in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory, but pupils lose some ground compared to the promise they showed in Key Stage 1. Progress picks up as the quality of teaching improves and, by the end of Key Stage 2, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. Most Year 6 pupils reach the standard expected for 11-year-olds and a good proportion attain the higher level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good and supports their learning well. Pupils display strong attitudes to learning and their good attendance testifies to their enjoyment of school. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A rich range of experiences develops pupils' understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world. As a result, they behave very well and are caring and considerate towards each other. For example, older pupils act as 'Amberley angels', ensuring that younger ones are looked after and that no one feels left out or alone. Pupils feel very secure and well cared for. As one child said, 'this school looks after us and keeps us safe'. The pupils say that there is no bullying and they would be happy to approach any member of staff for help.

Pupils play a part in decision-making through the work of the school council and feel that their views are taken into account. They take part in many fundraising events and are justly proud of the money they have raised to help cure over 177 people with leprosy. Pupils have an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles and participate eagerly in an extensive range of sport and physical activities, including walking or cycling to school. They are also very aware of the importance of a balanced diet. Gaining the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards confirms the school's outstanding commitment to pupils, health and well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good, with some outstanding teaching in the Foundation Stage. Teachers plan lessons with clear learning objectives and tell pupils how they will judge their progress at the end of the lesson. Pupils understand what they need to do to succeed, and work hard to please their teachers. Pupils respond well to the probing questions that teachers use to develop their thinking and test their understanding. They enjoy being challenged to think hard, and solve a problem with a partner under the pressure of time. From the earliest age they learn to be independent and to respond promptly to changes in activity; time is thus well used for learning. By Year 6 they collaborate well, for example as 'learning partners'. Teachers' knowledge of what pupils need to learn next is not consistent throughout the school. The result is that, in some classes, pupils are not appropriately challenged and their learning slows. This is often the case in lower Key Stage 2, where data indicates that pupils' progress is not as good as elsewhere in the school. The subject leaders for English and mathematics are aware of this weakness, but have not had the opportunity to tackle it in the current year. In the Foundation Stage, learning is well planned so that it is interesting and exciting for young children. Throughout the school, teaching assistants work closely with teachers to provide effective support to pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with outstanding features. It meets the pupils' needs, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Provision for basic skills, including literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is good. The school's excellent personal, social and health education programme is very well planned to develop pupils' knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live. It gives very good support to their personal development. The curriculum is enhanced well by a wide range of visits which extend pupils' learning. Older pupils are enthusiastic about their recent residential visit to an outdoor activity centre where they pursued adventurous activities, learning self-reliance and team skills. Many visitors add excitement to learning. The recently introduced 'enrichment week', where learning was focused on practical activities, has proved very popular. As one girl summed it up, 'It was very creative. I loved it.'

The Foundation Stage curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of young children so that they learn through practical activity and play. There are not enough opportunities for children in the Reception classes to learn outdoors, especially in making choices about physical and creative play.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is good. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, who are well supported by learning mentors and skilled staff. As a consequence, they make good progress and are motivated to do well. The school gives careful attention to the needs of its vulnerable children and provides them with good personal support. Procedures for health and safety, child protection and for checks on all adults working in school are thorough and secure. Parents feel overwhelmingly that their children are safe and well cared for in school. They particularly appreciate the dedication of staff.

Pupils develop supportive relationships with each other and adults, and know how to report any issues related to bullying. Good communication with parents ensures that children settle quickly and are well supported from the moment they start school. Strong links with local high schools underpin the good arrangements to support the pupils' transition to secondary education.

Pupils' progress and attainment are carefully tracked, taking into account the outcomes of regular assessment. Teachers' use of assessment is developing and in the current year more frequent assessments are planned. This signals improvement in the use of assessment since the last inspection.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and works with energy and determination to drive the school forward. She is responsible for the special ethos of the school in which all pupils are encouraged to grow in confidence and self-esteem. She is well supported by a similarly committed team of staff and governors who share her purpose and direction. There is a strong sense of teamwork and morale is high. The professional development of staff is given high priority. As a result, the school is set on an upward trend in performance and there is a good awareness of what needs to be improved. There are detailed plans to take the school forward, but they would benefit from a sharper focus on outcomes for pupils and strategies to measure progress more effectively. The school's view of its strengths and weaknesses is largely accurate. However, the role of subject leaders is having insufficient impact on improving pupils' achievement. A lack of rigour in the school's approach to identifying weaknesses in teaching and learning is holding back the rate of achievement for some pupils.

The governing body plays an important part in shaping the school's direction.

It has a good understanding of its role and responsibilities and is increasingly knowledgeable about what is happening in school. The governors are very supportive, and provide good levels of challenge. They are involved in evaluating the school's performance and planning for improvement. As a consequence, and along with its other strengths, the school has good capacity to improve further.

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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?	2
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	2
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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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

Amberley Primary School

East Bailey

Killingworth

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE12 6SQ

29 January 2007

Dear Children

As you know, Mrs Fitzpatrick, Mrs Richardson and I visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. We enjoyed our two days with you, and thank you for being so polite and friendly. We were made to feel very welcome. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

Firstly, we would like you to know that you go to a good school. We are pleased that you work hard, and get on well with one another. We liked the way you care for each other and were impressed with the work of the Amberley Angels in looking after younger children on the playground. We were delighted to see that so many of you have an excellent awareness of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle. We were impressed with all the opportunities you have to keep fit and eat healthily. We hope you continue to enjoy walking and cycling to school.

We were very pleased to learn of your concern for others less fortunate than yourselves through your fundraising. What a lot of money you raised for Lepira! You must be very proud of your efforts. Well done!

We are pleased that you are taught well, feel safe and that you make good progress in your learning. Mrs. Barkes and all the staff and governors work very hard to make the school as good as it can be and we are sure that it will continue to improve. We have asked them to do two things which will help make your school even better.

Firstly, we have asked if they can make lessons more challenging and interesting in the middle years to enable some of you to make even more progress. Secondly, we have asked them to improve management, by making sure that they look more closely at how you are learning.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools