

# Hylton Castle Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108832
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sunderland
<b>Inspection number</b>	288200
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Petts

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	352
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Bilton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Elaine Armstrong
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 January 2003
<b>School address</b>	Cramlington Road Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR5 3QL
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5535574
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 5535577

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This school is much larger than most primary schools. It serves a community experiencing high economic deprivation. Pupils are almost wholly from a White British background with very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than found in most schools but few pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement and the standards they attain. As a result of these weaknesses the effectiveness of the school is inadequate and it does not provide satisfactory value for money.

The school judges its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory but in doing so has taken insufficient account of the legacy of underachievement, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge well below what is typical for their age. Speaking and language skills are particularly weak. As a result of carefully planned activities and effective support, the children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Although much improved, standards remain below those expected for their age by the end of Reception. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory overall progress and good progress in Year 2, with standards close to average. In Years 3 to 6, whilst there are clear signs of improvement, the pattern of progress is uneven and remains inadequate. Underachievement is particularly evident in Year 4 and amongst pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Reading skills amongst the lower ability pupils are too low. Standards remain low by the time the pupils leave school and do not provide them with a wholly satisfactory basis for the next stage of their education.

Teaching and learning have in the past been inadequate but are now satisfactory as a result of appropriate action by the school's leaders. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is much improved and there is now a strong emphasis on developing basic skills. In Years 1 and 2, the monitoring of pupils' progress reveals positive effects of the school's efforts to improve teaching by ensuring more variety and activity in lessons. In spite of this, teaching does not consistently focus on meeting the needs of individual pupils and does not match work well enough to the needs of pupils of different abilities. As a consequence, many pupils are not challenged enough and many older pupils have gaps in their learning. This is the case for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities: they make inadequate progress as a result of lesson planning which does not match learning to their needs well enough.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils behave well and are well cared for. They are happy, particularly when learning is made fun and practical approaches are used: for example, when discussing ideas in pairs or in a group. Discussions such as this have a good effect on speaking and listening skills. Attendance and punctuality have improved significantly as a result of concerted whole-school approaches to promote the value of regular attendance and arrival on time. Pupils appreciate improvements in behaviour as a result of initiatives to reduce bullying. Pupils know how to stay safe and recognise the benefits of adopting a healthy lifestyle.

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. It integrates 'Every Child Matters' principles well and has an ever-increasing emphasis on basic skills. Whilst this enhances learning, it is not yet engaging lower ability pupils well enough. Although there are now secure systems in place to track pupils' progress and set targets, not all staff make regular enough use of assessment data to plan learning and engage pupils. The school enjoys very good links with parents, who are increasingly joining in and helping pupils with their learning. They are very supportive of the school and appreciate the work that it does.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head and deputy headteacher, well supported by local authority consultants, support staff well. Whilst progress in tackling the legacy of underachievement since the last inspection has sometimes been slow, there is now more evidence of the effect of a range of initiatives. The governors are committed and supportive but they do not hold the school to account well enough. Nevertheless the school has satisfactory capacity to improve, demonstrated by the effect of actions taken and the clear commitment of the headteacher to driving forward improvement.

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

- Raise standards and improve the achievement of all pupils.
- Improve the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Improve teaching, matching tasks accurately to pupils' abilities and raising the level of challenge.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils' achievement is inadequate and standards are exceptionally low by the end of Year 6. The progress that pupils make is uneven across year groups and ability groups and is therefore unsatisfactory.

Pupils join the Nursery with well below average attainment. They make good progress and gain ground reaching below average standards by the time they enter Year 1. A strong partnership with the Surestart initiative contributes to increased involvement of parents in pupils' learning by, for example, providing 'listening bags' and other educational toys for use at home with their children. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and standards are below average rather than very low by the end of Year 2. This is the result of a more careful matching of task to ability and a sharp focus on reading and writing. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' progress is far more varied and is unsatisfactory. Consequently, pupils underachieve and their results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 are consistently low. This is largely the result of teaching that takes too little account of individual ability and need. The school's monitoring of progress shows some improvement when lessons have more variety and challenge. This is particularly the case in Year 5, though there are still occasions when expectations of lower ability pupils are not high enough.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their own attitudes to learning, explore their own feelings and consider the feelings of others. As a result, normally their behaviour is good and they are able to gain from lessons. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe and appreciated. Pupils' attendance is now satisfactory, having improved significantly in the last year. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles by taking exercise, eating sensibly and taking a full part in personal development programmes. They are happy to take on responsibility. School council members attach much importance to the opportunities they are given to contribute to the running of the school. The 'Heart to Heart' club successfully gives pupils the chance to share the worries and concerns they have with adults.

Pupils' low standards of attainment do not prepare them well for their future economic well being. Nevertheless, their improved attendance, prompt arrival to school and more opportunities

to work together are helping to set the groundwork for improvements in pupils' preparation for adult life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are greatly improved and are now satisfactory. Nevertheless, evidence from the inspection indicates that there is not enough good teaching to boost achievement. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage in an increasingly stimulating environment. Here there is a strong focus on children's personal development and communication skills. Relationships throughout the school are good and behaviour is usually well managed. However, the teachers' planning often lacks sufficient consideration of pupils' needs and how their individual learning can be extended. In addition, the use of valuable progress tracking data is inconsistent. When learning objectives are tailored to meet need, are clearly displayed and explained in a way in which all pupils can understand, the pace of lessons is faster. Pupils recognise that they learn more when there is more variety and first-hand experiences. For example, in a Year 6 lesson when pupils were invited to ask questions of a single mother about the demands of bringing up a child, both boys and girls were engrossed and their communication skills tested. More effective use of interactive resources is increasing motivation but many resources are not exciting enough and their use is not always fully thought out. In lessons characterised by high expectations, pupils take a more active part in learning and there is no time for them to drift off task or become restless.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. Despite an increasing range of good features, for example sport, art and music, senior leaders are aware nevertheless that the curriculum has weaknesses and does not always capture pupils' interest. The school is working hard to provide a more stimulating curriculum to extend pupils' skills, for example, in the development of outdoor learning. The curriculum is now making an important contribution to personal development and this adds to pupils' enjoyment. Themes are used systematically and are progressively more structured to boost literacy skills, chiefly reading and writing. Not all opportunities are exploited sufficiently to enhance the quality of pupils' work through the use of information and communication technology (ICT). A residential week in the Lake District provides Year 5 pupils with further opportunities to extend personal and work related skills.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school takes good care of its pupils and is always looking to find ways of improving what it provides, for example, by establishing a Nurture group to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils, child protection and risk assessments are in place and understood by staff. Relationships are good with the moral and social aspects strong. Procedures to track pupils' progress are good although the information is not always used to full effect in support of better progress. Explicit guidance for improvement and clear targets are regularly provided in literacy though not always offered in other subjects. The monitoring of the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities, while improving, is inconsistent and, as a consequence, targeted support is not always well enough matched to need. Good use is made of a range of agencies to add to the support for pupils and their families. This includes developing greater pupil understanding of danger, including that associated with drugs and alcohol.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The head and deputy headteacher have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher is clear about what needs to be done and displays a determination to eliminate underachievement. However, whilst the school's self-evaluation is correct in what it says, its judgements are too generous. Nevertheless, the school's improvement plan proposes realistic action to move the school forward and some effective action has already been taken to improve attendance, to foster more positive attitudes to learning, improve teaching and to raise standards of writing. There is still much to be done to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they can. Whilst regular monitoring is undertaken, the rigour of analysis is uneven; as a consequence, guidance for teachers and support staff does not show them clearly enough how to improve lesson planning. In particular, this shortcoming has slowed progress towards meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. Subject leaders are increasingly involved in evaluating their work and taking responsibility for their own subjects. Although the school has a core of enthusiastic governors, for example, parent governors who listen to pupils reading, their grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is superficial. As a result, they do not provide sufficient help to drive the school forward.





## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	4

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<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>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

**Annex B**

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

18 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Hylton Castle Primary School, Sunderland, SR5 3QL

Thank you for the very friendly welcome to your school and for being 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 and during assembly.

You behaved well and obviously enjoy school, judging by your improved attendance. You feel safe and have confidence that staff will help you with any problems or worries. You made clear to us that you enjoy the range of after-school clubs available to you. You know how to adopt a lifestyle which keeps you healthy and fit.

For a number of years, the standards of work, particularly of older pupils, have not been good enough and we feel that your school needs to improve. Your headteacher has already worked hard to bring about some improvements. We have asked the governors, headteacher and teachers to make sure that you make faster progress and that standards rise in all subjects. We have also asked that those of you who find learning difficult be given work that more closely matches what you need to make steady progress.

Inspectors will watch the school's performance closely and visit again next year to check just how much progress the school is making in bringing about these improvements.

We hope that you will continue to arrive on time, enjoy school, work as hard as you can and do as well as you can.

We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts

Lead inspector