

Newton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112507
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number	289302
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Edwards

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Diana Richards
Headteacher	Ms Allison Partlow
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002
School address	Hall Lane Newton Alfreton Derbyshire DE55 5TL
Telephone number	01773 872384
Fax number	01773 872384

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small primary school serves the former mining community of Newton and most pupils live in the village. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage and almost all come from homes where English is the first language. Attainment on entry to the school is below expectations in relation to the children's communication skills and aspects of their personal development. However, there is a wide range of ability in each class. Most of the pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The socio-economic circumstances of most families are broadly average. Although the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average, there is an above average percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need.

The current headteacher was seconded for a term to Newton from another Derbyshire headship in September 2006. The period of secondment was later extended for another term and she was then appointed the substantive headteacher in April 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education within the context of a caring environment. Although the test results for pupils in Year 6 in 2006 showed a marked dip in performance compared with the previous year, current standards of work in Years 5 and 6 show encouraging signs of improvement. Mathematics remains a relative strength with standards edging above the national average this year. Standards in English, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are broadly average. Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory but improving.

Children start school with levels of attainment that are below national expectations, particularly in their communication skills and aspects of their personal development. Although the children feel safe and secure in the reception class, they make only satisfactory progress. This is because the teaching does not fully engage them nor meet the needs of all children in this mixed-age class. The curriculum is good and the teaching assistants provide valuable support. However, parents' confidence has not yet been secured and this weakness has impaired the children's progress. Overall teaching and learning are sound because any weaknesses in reception are made up in Key Stage 1 and 2 where the quality of teaching and learning, which is well informed by the quality of the assessment data, is better. Although the test results over recent years indicate that progress has only been satisfactory, pupils in Years 2 to 6 are now making good progress.

The school makes good provision for the welfare of its pupils. As one parent commented, 'There is a very caring and supportive ethos in school. Any social difficulties which the children have had are dealt with effectively'. Each member of staff knows each of the pupils by name and the adults provide good role models. As a result, relationships and standards of behaviour are good. Furthermore the pupils are learning how to stay fit and healthy. The school's ethos, alongside the exciting range of opportunities available to the pupils, strongly supports their personal development and keeps them interested. The pupils are very keen to come to school and attendance rates, though broadly in line with the national average, are improving. They work well together, particularly in practical science investigations, and are developing skills that will serve them well in the world of work.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The previous leadership team resolved the key issues from the last inspection relating to the provision in ICT, standards in writing and the role of the governors. Governors now have a good awareness of the work of the school. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory and improving under the strong direction and guidance of the headteacher. The headteacher has accurately identified where improvements need to be made and has approached her work with rigour and enthusiasm. A new management team has been appointed to commence work in the autumn. The school's capacity for further improvement is good, as much has been achieved in the current academic year, particularly in terms of sharpening assessment procedures. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop teaching quality in the Foundation Stage to provide more effective learning for the children.
- Strengthen its links with parents, particularly in the Foundation Stage, to provide a more effective partnership.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Progress from Foundation Stage to Year 2 is uneven. The children achieve satisfactorily in the Foundation Stage but make better gains in Year 2, particularly in their speaking and listening and in their social development. In all other mixed-age classes, there is no distinction between the progress made by pupils of different ages.

Standards are now rising again in both the junior and infant classes. This is because the teachers and pupils have now a much clearer idea of what is needed to improve. Current overall standards in English, mathematics and science in Year 6 are broadly average. Although the pupils are unlikely to reach the school's ambitious targets this year, the standards they are reaching represent satisfactory achievement. The pupils are now making good progress in mathematics. Pupils also achieve well in science because they respond well to the school's emphasis on practical investigations. The high proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs benefit from the sensitive support they receive from the well-qualified teaching assistants and make good progress. Standards in ICT have been improved through enhanced resourcing and training for staff.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Attendance levels are in line with the national average and the pupils arrive at school punctually. Their behaviour is very good around the school and in lessons. The pupils report that incidents of poor behaviour are rare and they trust the staff to deal with any problems that might occur. Pupils are courteous, polite and helpful. They welcome the school's recent initiatives to promote a healthy lifestyle and know how to keep safe. They enjoy the full range of sporting and musical activities that the school has to offer and the school concerts, involving all of the pupils, make a very positive contribution to the local community. The pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. There has been good progress in enabling the pupils to understand a range of cultures and faiths from around the world. The pupils care for each other, mix well and take their responsibilities seriously. Through the activities of the school council, pupils successfully raise money for school equipment and work very well in groups to support charities. The pupils' academic progress combined with their well-developed social skills; provide a secure base for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and good for the oldest pupils. The teaching in the reception/Year 1 class is adequate but not inspirational. The planning for the younger children does not fully meet their needs and those in Year 1 are not stretched enough. In the other classes, particularly Years 4 to 6, the teachers use a range of strategies to motivate the pupils. The teaching assistants provide valuable support and share the responsibility for

the children's learning. Throughout the school, relationships between teachers and pupils are good and help to promote positive attitudes to learning. Pupils particularly enjoy computer-based learning and this is used well by teachers in some but not all classes. Because the school's assessment procedures are now much sharper, the work set increasingly offers the right amount of challenge to pupils and expectations are good. Pupils are now making better progress in their learning. Furthermore, feedback to pupils is thorough and focused on the learning objectives and the pupils have a secure understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good because it is particularly well enriched with a wide-ranging programme of visits, including a residential visit, and visitors to school. It is well planned with an appropriate focus on promoting skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. The curriculum strongly supports the pupils' personal development with many valuable opportunities to promote their well-being. In the Foundation Stage, the children benefit from an imaginative outdoor area but the classroom itself does not stimulate the children's interest in learning sufficiently. A key strength of the curriculum lies in the school's strong cultural traditions and the links with the community. Further strengths are the many and varied special events, such as the involvement of creative artists, dancers and sporting organisations that support pupils' learning. Their learning is further extended and enriched by a good programme of activities during and beyond the school day. For example, the whole school participates in t'ai chi lessons at the end of each week.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Pupils are very happy and secure here. Arrangements to ensure their safety and well-being are fully in place. The good pastoral care provided by the school is matched by the quality of academic guidance that the pupils are given. The school has developed new assessment and target-setting procedures that are being used well to further support the pupils' progress. These procedures have been refined to provide an accurate picture of the children's starting points and their progress is monitored very carefully. This information is used well to plan work for different groups of pupils and for the range of ages in most classes. The pupils are fully involved in this process and the older ones in particular have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher is committed to improving the quality of education in the face of a history of staff mobility and falling rolls. The staff functions well as a team. Teachers are developing skills in relation to their roles and responsibilities in evaluating achievement. The impact of greater rigour in the monitoring of pupil progress is beginning to be felt as standards improve. Equal opportunities are at the heart of the school's development plans and ensure that support is allocated to those in most need. The school has formed good working partnerships with neighbouring schools to accelerate the rate of change and improvement, but the full impact of these initiatives is yet to be felt. There

is still much to be done, particularly in developing the partnership with parents throughout the school, and developing the role of the new management team.

The governors are committed to the work of the school and provide conscientious support. They have developed a good understanding of the work of the school through their frequent visits, both formal and informal. In this way, their awareness of their responsibility to hold the school to account has grown, and they are fully involved in their role as critical friends, particularly in terms of monitoring the school's effectiveness.

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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
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

14 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newton Primary School, Hall Lane, Newton, Alfreton, Derbyshire, DE55 5TL

I really enjoyed my visit to your village school because everybody was so helpful and friendly. I was very pleased to be able to work with you in your classrooms, join in with your assemblies and watch you exercising so enthusiastically in your T'ai chi class. I can understand why you enjoy your school so much as there are many things that make your school special. Here are some of them:

- Everybody understands the school rules and behaves well.
- Everybody tries to be friendly, thoughtful and helpful. Well done!
- You do well in your mathematics lessons.
- The staff are caring and provide a range of activities and visits to keep you interested.

But, of course, as in all schools, there are still things that can be done to make your school even better:

- Firstly I know that you can do even better with your work, and I am asking your teachers to make sure everyone gets the best possible start when they join the school from Reception.
- I also want the school to work more closely with your parents to help you with your work.

Although there are things to be done to make your school even better, try to remember that Miss Partlow and the staff work very hard to help you to learn and you should remember to thank them. I would like to wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Edwards

Lead Inspector