

Annfield Plain Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114025
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	289782
Inspection dates	1–2 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Margaret Armstrong

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Ullathorne
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Marr
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2003
School address	Northgate Annfield Plain Stanley County Durham DH9 7UY
Telephone number	01207 234691
Fax number	01207 234691

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school set in a former mining community in the north of County Durham. It is located in an area that is socially and economically disadvantaged. Attainment on entry to the school is below average. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils come from families with a predominantly White British heritage. There is no pupil who speaks English as an additional language. The school has received the Healthy School award.

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, which provides good value for money. It works within a challenging social context where many of the pupils need considerable help and encouragement to enable them to learn successfully. Parents are very supportive of the school and are delighted with the progress their children make.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good so that children quickly become active, independent learners. Pupils build on this good start in Year 1 and continue to make good progress to attain above average standards in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Standards in writing are in line with average but higher attaining pupils could do better. In 2006, boys' attainment in writing was well below that of girls. Effective steps have been taken to address this. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable receive high quality support and achieve extremely well in relation to their capabilities.

Teaching and learning are consistently good. This promotes good achievement for all pupils. There are very strong relationships between staff and pupils. These underpin effective behaviour management and help create a good climate for learning. Teachers track pupils' progress carefully but they do not use marking well enough to help pupils know what they need to do next to improve.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They are confident and treat each other with respect. The caring, supportive ethos created in the school fosters these positive characteristics. Pupils enjoy going to school and this is reflected in improving attendance levels. They are keen to adopt healthy lifestyles by eating healthy meals and taking regular exercise. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community by raising funds for a range of charities. Their good learning, along with the school's strong emphasis on pupils' personal development, ensures that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of pupils. They report that learning is interesting and fun. The good curriculum offers a range of learning experiences and is enriched well through effective partnerships with the local community.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher leads and manages her school well. The senior leadership team work effectively with each other and with the supportive governing body. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school has a good understanding of what is working well and what needs attention. Consequently, improvement since the previous inspection is good and the school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attainment in writing for the more able pupils.
- Improve the use of marking across the school so pupils know what they need to do to move on in their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Children join the Foundation Stage with skills that are much less well developed than expected for their age, particularly in

communication, language and literacy. They make good progress because individuals' needs are identified swiftly and this provides the basis for carefully targeted additional support for each child. By the end of Reception, most have reached the expected level for their age across all areas of learning.

In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve well and attain standards above average in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing are average because too few pupils attain at the higher level and boys' writing skills are particularly weak. As a consequence of actions taken, such as the 'Pen Pals' project and 'Talking Partners', boys' attainment in writing has improved. However, higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should in writing because the school does not set sufficiently challenging targets for them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress towards their identified targets due to the carefully planned extra support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Children feel welcome and secure in the Foundation Stage and this helps them make good progress in their personal development. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they have very positive attitudes to learning. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in providing pupils with multi-cultural experiences and so increasing their understanding of society's cultural diversity. Moral and social development is well supported by the active encouragement of very good relationships throughout the school. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility and play a full part in the life of the school and community. They have many opportunities to make their views known; for instance, they contributed to discussions about ways of improving playground activities. Pupils have a good understanding of the need to stay healthy and many participate enthusiastically in the 'Early Birds' morning exercise programme. Pupils feel safe in school because they know any incident of harassment is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. The good grounding children receive in their social and basic skills prepares them well for the next stages of learning. Attendance is satisfactory and has improved this year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught well and learn new work at a fast rate. This is because of teachers' expertise in matching tasks to their learning needs. The introduction of new approaches to questioning is having a significant impact on the learning of boys of all abilities. However, higher attaining pupils do not do as well as they could in writing because the level of challenge is not high enough.

Throughout the school, lesson planning is good because it shows clearly what pupils are expected to learn by the end of the lesson. This ensures both staff and pupils are focused on what is important. Most pupils are attentive learners because teaching is lively and interesting. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils shared their ideas with a partner then contributed enthusiastically to a class discussion about imaginary homes. The effective use of interactive whiteboards in lessons across the school has resulted in increased levels of pupil engagement in learning. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and high expectations of their

behaviour. As a result, pupils concentrate fully on their learning. Skilled support assistants are well deployed and make a significant contribution to learning.

Effective tracking and assessment systems provide a clear picture of where support is needed and give valuable information for planning future work and setting targets. Marking is not used consistently to give children sufficient guidance on what should be improved or how to do it.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets all statutory requirements. The practical approach to learning in the Foundation Stage is planned well to engage interest. For example, children in the Reception class talked excitedly about ‘dancing butterflies’ within their study of mini-beasts. Provision for basic skills is effective. The curriculum for mixed age classes is well planned and ensures pupils have programmes of work that support their different learning needs. There is a robust curriculum for personal development, which results in pupils gaining confidence in their abilities. The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to enrich their learning, ranging from visitors into school, such as African drummers, visits out of school to Beamish Museum and support from outside agencies such as Derwentside Sports Partnership.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care and support are good. Procedures for child protection, risk assessments and health and safety are fully in place. Children know who to turn to with problems or concerns. As a result, strong relationships develop and children feel safe and secure. The school has a good partnership with parents and works hard to involve them in extending their children’s learning and promoting regular attendance. The good links with outside agencies ensure that the needs of pupils, especially those who are vulnerable, are met. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are extremely well supported and this results in them achieving very well. For example, the school’s involvement in the ‘Green Corridor’ programme has resulted in pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties making very good progress in their learning. Guidance is satisfactory. Teachers track pupils’ progress carefully but do not use marking well enough. As a result, pupils do not receive sufficient feedback about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and assistant headteacher work together effectively and this has helped them develop a good team spirit in the school. There is regular and accurate monitoring of planning, teaching and pupils’ work. As a result, standards are rising and there are clear signs of improvement. Curriculum leaders manage their subjects well. The school’s strong focus on professional development has resulted in leaders contributing confidently to school evaluation. Recent whole-school training on marking, however, has not improved the quality of guidance given to pupils on how they can improve their work. The good leadership provided by the headteacher in the co-ordination of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has ensured high quality support is available in lessons. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and provide effective support to bring about improvements.

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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?	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	1

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	1
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.

Annex A

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

5 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Annfield Plain Infant School, Stanley, County Durham,

DH9 7UY

Thank you for being so helpful when I visited your school. I very much enjoyed meeting you. I think you are all polite and friendly. I could see you enjoy school and that you work hard in your lessons. You are learning to live healthy lives through eating lots of fruit and vegetables and drinking water. I know you take lots of exercise and I really enjoyed seeing you dance in the Early Birds Fitness Club. Your teachers are working hard to make lessons interesting and I really liked the work you have done about managing your feelings and being kind to each other. You told me you feel safe in school and that you know who to talk to if you have a problem. I thought your behaviour was excellent and I was impressed with your very good attitudes to learning.

I do think there are one or two things that need to be improved. At the moment, some of you do not do as well as you could in writing because the work you are given is too easy. Also, your teachers could tell you more about how you can improve when they mark your work. You can help by always doing your best in every lesson.

You already play a very important part in your school and your teachers are very proud of you. I know you will continue to try hard and would like to wish you the best of luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Armstrong

Lead Inspector