



Howden-le-Wear Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114061
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289796
Inspection dates 2–3 November 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Shepherd

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Street
School category	Community		Howden-le-Wear, Crook
Age range of pupils	4–11		County Durham, DL15 8HJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01388 763287
Number on roll (school)	70	Fax number	01388 763287
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father Stewart Irwin
		Headteacher	Mrs Valerie McCourt
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 2–3 November 2006	Inspection number 289796
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves the village of Howden-le-Wear and is smaller than average. The community has mixed economic and social conditions, with areas of deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is twice the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average. Pupils are organised in mixed age classes apart from Year 6. There are considerable differences in the number of pupils in each age group. Standards on entry vary between year groups and are average or below average. There are higher levels of mobility than usual. The school has recently been refurbished and the new buildings now include a breakfast club and a privately run after-school club and a Nursery. There have been considerable changes in staffing over the past 14 months, with three-quarters of the teachers joining the school during this time.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with good features and it provides satisfactory value for money. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. By the end of Year 6, standards are average and achievement satisfactory but standards have varied significantly over recent years. This is partly due to different standards on entry and partly to the higher than average proportion of pupils joining the school part way through the academic year. Standards are rising in Year 2 and achievement is good in the Reception/Year 1 class and the Years 2/3 class. This is due to the additional resources the school has put into these age groups.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with good features. Teachers work well with support staff but miss opportunities for pupils to share their learning with each other. In the junior classes, the pace of lessons is not consistently fast enough and teachers use too many worksheets. This reduces pupils' opportunities to write in their own words or to show their working out in mathematics.

The school sets a high priority of creating a good atmosphere for learning in one big happy family. They are successful in this aim and pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. They work and play together in harmony. This has a particularly beneficial impact on the pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who achieve well.

Personal development is good with outstanding features. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. All members of staff talk to them with courtesy and respect and the pupils respond extremely well, reflecting the same qualities. They are keen to take responsibility. Boys play happily with girls and older pupils know younger pupils very well. Pupils have an excellent understanding of their role in the school community. This extends to the village community because the school provides such high quality links.

Care and support for pupils are good. The small size of the school means that staff know individuals very well. Adults emphasise the importance of safe and healthy living and pupils have a good understanding of these issues. Pupils show flexibility in approaching tasks and have good skills of working together in teams. This prepares them well for their future lives. The good quality personal development is due to the clear guidance that staff give pupils. This is not as effective in their academic development. Pupils do not have a detailed enough understanding of what they need to do to improve.

The headteacher has led the school well through the changes. She takes a clear lead in establishing the benefits of being a small school. The curriculum is good and makes very good use of specialists from the locality to support pupils' learning. This is effective in extending pupils' personal development. The governors have a good level of expertise and have a thorough knowledge of the school community. Subject leaders are keen to take their subjects forward and raise standards but have not had long enough in their posts to make an impact. Staff are very keen to work together to raise standards. The school evaluates its performance effectively. These features give the school a good capacity to succeed in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

Provide more consistent standards and achievement by:

- improving pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work
- giving pupils more opportunities to share their learning with each other
- increasing the pace in lessons and reducing the amount of worksheets in the junior classes
- extending the leadership and management roles of the subject leaders.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Year 6 standards vary significantly from one year to another. Standards were significantly above average in 2004 and particularly high in English. Standards dropped to below average in 2005, but have risen in 2006. More able pupils in 2006 were particularly successful in mathematics, with half of the pupils reaching above the level expected for Year 6 pupils. The inconsistencies over time are due to the small size of each year group, where each pupil represents a high proportion of the overall percentage. It is also a result of varying levels of attainment on entry to the school and higher levels of mobility than usual. There are no differing trends in standards between subjects or between boys or girls.

Standards in Year 2 followed the same inconsistent trend, but for the past two years they have been rising and have been above average. This represents good progress because pupils enter the school with standards that are broadly average. The inspection confirms that this trend is being sustained. Pupils make a good start to their schooling in Reception and they achieve well. This is due to the thorough organisation of the work and the well-balanced and challenging curriculum.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well due to the good quality support from the teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good with outstanding features. Pupils respond well to the many opportunities to extend their personal development. Older pupils interact very sensitively with the younger pupils and enjoy the responsibilities for looking after them across a range of different contexts. Playtimes certainly fulfil the school's aims of providing a school that is like one big happy family. Pupils have great confidence in the buddy system and say that they feel safe. They have a good understanding of the importance of keeping healthy and take full advantage of the good range of sporting activities and clubs. Pupils approach learning positively and work hard. They particularly enjoy the interesting range of visits out of school.

Behaviour is excellent; pupils show respect for adults and fellow pupils.

Attendance is above average and has improved since the school introduced the good quality breakfast club. Pupils have an excellent understanding of being part of both the school and the village community. They are proud of shared projects, such as when a local artist joined them to produce a striking mural in the playground. Pupils are developing good skills for their future lives through the opportunities for teamwork and for taking initiative. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong and have sophisticated social skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with good features. Teachers work consistently well with the teaching assistants and this has a positive impact on the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers plan carefully for the mixed age classes to ensure that lessons match the different year groups' needs. Teachers miss opportunities to allow pupils to share their learning with each other, which reduces their understanding of which aspects of the lesson worked best for them. In the junior classes, the pace of some lessons is not fast enough, resulting in a drop in learning in some parts of lessons. Too many lessons are based on worksheets in the junior classes. This reduces pupils' opportunities to record their learning in their own words or to show their mathematical working out. Teaching and learning are good in the Reception/Year 1 and the Years 2/3 classes. Teachers use a good range of practical activities to extend and reinforce learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Staff work hard to provide a well-balanced programme of work for pupils. The Reception planning is particularly good and covers both the indoor and outdoor curriculum carefully. Pupils value the very good range of visits out into the local community. The school seizes opportunities to enrich pupils' experiences, such as taking part in a Hindu festival and projects such as 'Working on the Wear' and developing a high quality wildlife garden. The inclusion of French in the curriculum develops pupils' life skills well. The school sets a high priority on physical education and has the Activemark Gold award and the Healthy Schools Award. This priority, together with the thorough programme of work for personal, social, health and emotional education, has a significant impact on pupils' personal development. The organisation of pupils to work in mixed age groups from Reception to Year 6 for one session every week reinforces their understanding of family values very effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, support and guidance are satisfactory. The provision of the care and support aspects is good. All members of staff are seen as part of an important team that respond to individual pupils' needs. This ensures that the same good quality of care and support runs from the beginning of the day, through the lunchtime and on to the after school provision. The school's safeguarding procedures are thorough. Parents are positive about their partnership with the school. Guidance for personal development is very good and this results in pupils developing a mature attitude towards school. Guidance for academic development is not as effective. The deputy headteacher is working effectively to simplify the systems for tracking pupils' progress but these are in their infancy. At present, pupils are unsure of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision of how she wants to develop and improve the school's work. Together with the governors, she has managed the disruptive impact of the refurbishment of the buildings and the many changes in staffing well. This is resulting in improved achievement and standards in Reception/Year 1 and the Years 2/3 classes, a better quality environment for pupils' learning and the provision of additional childcare for the school and the community. The changes in staffing have resulted in significant changes in the responsibilities of subject coordinators and the majority are only just beginning to move into their new roles. The leadership and management of the governing body are good. Governors use their expertise effectively to support the school's developments. For example, a governor led training in Equality and Diversity, which extended staff's understanding of these issues. The current staff team have the commitment and the determination to work together to improve the consistency in standards and achievement and the school now has a good capacity to improve.

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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?	3
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	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	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	1
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	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	3

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?	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	3
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

Howden-le-Wear Primary School

School Street

Howden-le-Wear

Crook

County Durham

DL15 8HJ

2 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for being so helpful when I was inspecting your school. You were all so friendly and ready to talk to me.

I was really delighted by your excellent behaviour. You all work and play so well together. It is really impressive that the older pupils look after the younger pupils around the school and in the playground. Your teachers help you to do some really interesting things in the community like going to play Indian drums at the Sage. You take advantage of the interesting activities like looking after the wildlife garden and producing those big scarecrows in the hall. Your school buildings have really improved and the breakfast club gives you a really good start to the day. You have worked hard to make sure that you come to school every day and on time, ready to start your new lessons. Your headteacher and governors have worked hard to make your school a better place for you.

Your teachers work very well with the teaching assistants. I have asked them to give you more chances to talk to each other about what you are learning and to help you to understand better what you need to do to improve your work. Your teachers all have different subjects that they look after and they are going to spend more time seeing what you do in their subjects. I am sure that you will all talk to them about the work you have covered and what you have learnt best.

I really enjoyed my visit to your school and I hope that you all do your best in future to make it an even better place to learn.

Best wishes

Maggi Shepherd

Additional inspector