

# Escomb Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114103
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	289807
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joan Elton

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	210
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Marjorie Kellett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Keith Taylor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 July 2002
<b>School address</b>	Escomb Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 7SR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01388 603273
<b>Fax number</b>	01388 608359

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Escomb Primary School is slightly smaller than the national average. It is in a semi-rural location on the edge of Bishop Auckland and serves a variety of areas, including the villages of Escomb and Witton Park. It has a predominantly White British population with a very small proportion from other minority ethnic backgrounds. Whilst there are some features of deprivation, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. When children start school in the Reception class, their standards are below those expected for most children of this age. The school has a slightly higher than average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Escomb Primary School is a good school. It has outstanding features, which include care, personal development and inclusion.

The school stands at the heart of the community and is rightly held in high regard by parents and pupils. The phrase 'every child matters' is central to its philosophy. The school provides equal learning opportunities and creates a vibrant and happy atmosphere, where all pupils thrive and make good progress.

Children learn well from the start of Reception, where standards on entry are below those expected for their age. Reception staff provide a well-balanced, imaginative range of learning experiences inside and outside the classroom. However, access to the outdoor area is difficult, its tarmac surface restricts use and the school has little sturdy equipment for vigorous activities. The school is already aware of this situation and is currently exploring ways to improve the outdoor learning opportunities for children. Reception children come from a wide variety of pre-school settings. Nevertheless, all staff create good routines, a cooperative atmosphere and smooth transition between activities. This provides a secure basis for class cohesion. Focussed planning, good teaching and clear tracking of achievement ensure further progress. This year, most Reception children are on target to reach the early learning goals expected of them.

Pupils reach average standards at age seven and above average at age 11. Achievement for all pupils is good. Teaching and learning are good but the assessment system, although effective, is not yet fully developed or utilised. Pupils' behaviour is excellent; there is little time wasted in lessons and pupils enjoy well-planned curricular experiences. This is a school which values relationships, takes good care of its pupils and gives every pupil the chance to participate fully in everything the school has to offer, in and out of the classroom. Pupils make great strides in their personal development, which is outstanding.

The school is well led and well managed. The headteacher, staff and governors share a determination that all pupils will succeed. Their self-evaluation is accurate; they know their strengths, have correctly identified what needs to improve and are taking the necessary measures. Since the last inspection they have sustained the school's high standards and improved Reception class provision. The strong commitment to raising standards and working in very effective partnerships with outside agencies, places the school in a good position to make further improvements. The school manages its finances very effectively and gives good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the access to, and increase the equipment available for, outdoor learning for Reception children.
- Be more rigorous in analysing pupils' progress to identify and meet their needs.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. Their current work and the school's data show that standards are above average.

When children begin school many have standards below those typical for their age, particularly in personal and social development, language and number. The good provision in the Foundation Stage ensures that children settle quickly and achieve well. By the end of the Reception year, many are on course to reach the early learning goals expected of them. This represents good progress. Pupils continue to achieve well and reach standards that are in line with the national average by the end of Year 2.

In 2006, after several years of test results near the national average, there was a dip in Key Stage 1 to below average. This was because of the low standards when this group started school and staff turnover. The school responded effectively by introducing initiatives to accelerate the progress of these pupils, now in Year 3. School data and work in pupils' books shows this has been successful.

Work in lessons and in pupils' books confirms that progress is good in Years 3 to 6. In 2006, test results for all three core subjects were above national expectations. Inspection evidence supported by school data indicates that current standards are broadly similar to 2006 test results.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress throughout the school. This is because they have a good level of support within a constructive and encouraging atmosphere.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Pupils are courteous, thoughtful and kind because they respect the high expectations of staff. Good manners are just an intrinsic part of school life. Pupils love coming to school because of the fun activities. One parent even said, 'My child hates being off at weekends.' They work very hard with or without direct adult supervision, and co-operate maturely and fruitfully whether untangling a mathematics problem or playing marbles in the yard. The diversity of their cultural development is exemplified by the opportunity to record ocarina music for a new local radio station and links with a Tanzanian school. Pupils develop excellent self-esteem.

Pupils know how to lead a healthy life, especially older pupils, although some are more active physically than others after school. They are acutely aware of how to keep themselves and others safe, notably through their pro-active anti-bullying activities. The school council, influenced by class councils, is central to such action and gives pupils a fine sense of civic responsibility. This is reinforced by strong links with the community; for example, involvement in the village development plan. Pupils are well prepared for life ahead in their secondary education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school.

Strengths lie in the good level of challenge for all pupils, the relaxed but constructive ethos in which lessons take place and the clarity of objectives and explanations. All pupils are well

supported during lessons; activities are interesting and imaginative and pupils, therefore, respond with great enthusiasm. They have been taught good work routines: they listen carefully and speak with confidence; they check for accuracy; they collaborate well with each other and present their work systematically and neatly. In one particularly good Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher provided challenging activities, which accurately matched the abilities of all pupils. In addition, her probing questions and ideas, as she supported group work, made the pupils reflect on their findings and test number patterns more thoroughly. Throughout the lesson, pupils were fully absorbed with their work and made exceptionally good progress.

Occasionally, opportunities to strengthen literacy are missed and teachers are not always as effective at matching work to the full range of ability. Although the marking of work checks the extent to which pupils have understood the lesson, there is some inconsistency in showing pupils exactly how to improve their work. Highly competent teaching assistants prepare their work well and support pupils' learning most effectively.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has a good curriculum. It is carefully planned and tightly organised so that all pupils benefit equally, including those who have special needs or talents. There is a strong emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills and teachers provide good scope for extending these in all subjects. For example, Year 3 pupils have strengthened their writing by detailing their recipe of chicken Creole. However, information and communication technology (ICT) skills are not promoted quite so overtly. The curriculum is enriched well by clubs, visits and visitors. These broaden pupils' horizons and provide valuable experiences, including activities such as Aboriginal dancing and new age curling.

In the Foundation Stage, provision is good. There is a good mix of direct teaching and independent learning. Activities are interesting and much strengthened by imaginative resources. The outdoor provision for Reception children is satisfactory; elsewhere, it is outstanding. The grounds include a kitchen garden, adventure trail, maze, bird hide and wildlife meadow, all of which promote environmental awareness and physical development, in particular. An amphitheatre is an imminent addition to create seating and possibilities for drama activities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school takes excellent care of its pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place, and there are very good systems, for example, of double-checking the safety of the accommodation. Policies conform to regulations and are up-to-date. The pastoral care of pupils is especially strong and greatly appreciated by parents. Teachers know pupils extremely well, and their warmth and sensitivity give pupils great support, especially the more vulnerable or insecure pupils. Excellent partnerships with outside agencies are a boon to pupils' well-being.

The school has recently introduced good systems to monitor pupils' progress. This enables staff to identify quickly pupils who may be underachieving and provide extra help. The full impact of the system has yet to be felt. Currently, analysis of pupils' progress lacks the rigour needed to fine-tune planning and teaching to meet pupils' needs more efficiently.

Some parents feel that they do not have enough chance to discuss their children's progress formally with teachers during the year, but suitable opportunities do exist. The school could do more to celebrate pupils' work through display.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The excellent leadership of the headteacher provides a clear and caring vision for the school and he has the determination and stamina to ensure its continued progress. The headteacher has taken every opportunity to benefit from the advice and support of local authority consultants and other partners. He has enhanced the school's stature by involving pupils in some exciting national and international projects. During his long period of headship, he has worked well with staff and governors to sustain high standards and to augment the facilities of the school. Pupils have access to modern well-equipped classrooms and a stimulating outdoor environment. The headteacher is well supported by a hard working deputy head teacher, who leads many initiatives, a committed senior staff and active, knowledgeable governors.

The school has made good progress in the way it monitors and evaluates pupils' performance. Systems for checking the quality of teaching are rigorous. Governance is good. Governors work very well with the staff leadership team to ensure that there is no complacency. The school is held in high esteem by parents. The leadership team reviews all aspects of school life to maintain that confidence and to secure further progress. Governors have effective links with the school's parent/teacher association and the community. All work well together to ensure that the school stays central to village life.

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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	<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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<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>	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	1
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**

6 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Escomb Primary School, Bishop Auckland, DL14 7SR.

Thank you for the welcome you gave Mr Scott and myself when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and were most impressed with your manners and good behaviour. We appreciated the help you gave us, especially in sharing your work and ideas about the school.

We think that your teachers and other staff take good care of you and provide good opportunities for you. They work very hard and are successful in helping you with your work. You make good progress in your school and learn how to be responsible citizens. These are very important skills; you will need them throughout your life.

We found your school to be a very happy place and we noticed how well you all got on together. You are very enthusiastic in lessons and clearly enjoy the interesting challenges your teachers set for you. We have asked your headteacher and governors to help you further by providing an outdoor area suitable for Reception children. We would also like your teachers to help you make greater and quicker progress in your work. They will do this by finding out your problems and giving you the help you need. You can help them by aiming to do your best at all times, by taking note of the comments in your books and by always doing your homework. We have every confidence that your teachers will be successful in helping you achieve even more.

We send you all our good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Elton

Mr A Scott

Inspectors