

Pittington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114125
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	289812
Inspection date	1 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr William Kellett
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Lee
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003
School address	Hallgarth Lane Pittington Durham County Durham DH6 1AF
Telephone number	0191 3720314
Fax number	0191 3720314

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is similar in size to most primary schools nationally. It is in an area that is above average in terms of social and economic advantage. The proportion of pupils who claim a free school meal is lower than the national average. A lower proportion of pupils than is seen nationally in primary schools have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and currently no pupil has a statement of their special educational need. Most pupils are White British with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. On entry to school, standards are above those typical of Nursery age children.

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. It provides pupils with good teaching and a good curriculum, which results in consistently high standards by the time pupils leave in Year 6. Pupils also play their part in this success. Their attendance is good and they respond well to the wide range of educational visits that enrich the curriculum. Pupils enjoy all the school has to offer and acquire many of the skills needed to be good citizens. They are eager to support the work of their school and recognise that they have responsibilities to one another. Those who volunteer to work as 'buddies' have a mature understanding of their role and are rightly proud of their contribution to stamping out any incidents of bullying. The influence of the school council, however, is underdeveloped. Meetings are irregular and do not provide pupils with a means of sharing their views and ideas.

Good relationships between adults and pupils help to boost pupils' confidence. In lessons, teachers expect pupils to behave well and work hard. Pupils respond well to these expectations and rise to challenges. Older pupils are confident learners who revel in the frequent opportunities to solve problems, to work collaboratively and to take a degree of responsibility for their own learning and progress. The work of teaching assistants with small groups and individuals is effective. They know pupils' needs well and the targeted support given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make good progress. This very positive climate for learning results in good achievement. This is sometimes not the case when assessment is not used effectively to plan work for pupils at an appropriate level.

Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well because provision for their learning is good. By the end of Year 2, pupils have made satisfactory progress and attain standards that are above average in literacy and numeracy. Their rate of progress increases in upper Key Stage 2 and this is reflected in the well above average standards attained in the 2006 national tests.

The good curriculum and the care, guidance and support given to pupils contribute effectively to their good personal development and well-being. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and the benefits to be gained from regular exercise. More could be done, however, to further encourage pupils to make healthy eating choices.

Leadership and management are good. The school's view of itself is accurate and has resulted in a clear shared vision between staff in order to raise standards even further. Effective monitoring has helped the school to identify areas where improvement is required. Systems to track pupils' progress are being developed and have enabled the school to target support to pupils who they identify as needing help with their learning. Evaluation of the information gained from monitoring, however, is not yet robust enough to pinpoint exactly where progress slows or to ensure that teachers consistently set tasks which challenge all pupils. The school, supported by good governance, has tackled successfully weaknesses from the last inspection and the capacity to make further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use evaluation of monitoring information more robustly to pinpoint where progress slows.
- In planning some lessons, use assessment information more effectively to ensure that pupils of all abilities are challenged consistently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are well above average. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage; the majority exceed the early learning goals for their age by the end of the Reception year.

Pupils make steady progress in Key Stage 1, to maintain above average standards. The school's approach to analysing pupils' progress and providing additional support for pupils has in the main been successful in addressing the dip in standards seen at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2006.

Standards in Year 6 are well above average. This is also reflected in pupils' results over time where on a number of occasions, including 2006, overall results in national tests have been significantly above the national average. Statutory targets were met at the expected Level 4 and exceeded at the higher Level 5 in mathematics but not in English. Inspection evidence indicates that this is because when in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons. Boys and girls do equally well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because their needs are identified early and effective support is provided to ensure that they are fully included in all the school has to offer. As a result, they make the same good progress as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They have good attitudes to their work because they are consistently rewarded for high quality effort. Behaviour and relationships are good and pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. As a result, they are polite and look after one another well; this is clearly demonstrated by those pupils who have volunteered to be 'buddies'. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance. They know how to keep safe and are confident that they are actively involved in ensuring that bullying is a thing of the past. Although most pupils have a good understanding of the need to keep active and have a healthy diet, many still prefer to choose less healthy options at lunchtimes.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They develop good self-esteem and through many opportunities for collaborative working acquire good social skills. Pupils have a mature concern for others less fortunate than themselves and respond sensitively to talks and prayers in assemblies. Pupils give generously of their time and energy to raise funds for a range of charities. They are proud of their involvement in the local community through their performances in and out of school. Although pupils are equally proud of their role as school councillors, this currently does not provide them with the opportunity to influence the work of the school as meetings are irregular and pupils have no means of setting the agenda for discussion. Pupils have good levels of literacy and numeracy and show high levels of cooperation. Therefore, by Year 6, they have developed into well-rounded individuals who have made a very good start on developing the skills to help them in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' good relationships with the pupils help them to manage and organise learning well. Resources, including electronic whiteboards, are used effectively to add interest and to motivate pupils. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to explain new work clearly; this is most effective when also linked to pupils' learning targets.

In lessons, work is generally well matched to help pupils take the next step in their learning. The school makes detailed assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. However, its system for comparing assessments against pupils' previous attainment is still developing and this reduces the precision with which the information can be used to plan activities which consistently challenge pupils of all abilities. Thorough assessment of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the setting of precise learning targets, help them to make good progress. Teachers' marking varies in quality. Although much is helpful, written comments do not always provide pupils with sufficient information on how to improve or develop further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's good curriculum enables pupils to develop their personal and social skills well and attain high academic standards. In the Foundation Stage there is a good balance of activities, some chosen by the children and some led by adults, which supports children's good personal and academic development. A strong focus on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills prepares pupils well for their future life. Regular visitors and trips to places of interest enhance pupils' learning well. Curriculum initiatives aimed at improving pupils' understanding of the importance of healthy eating are having some success. However, opportunities are still missed to encourage pupils to make healthy eating choices.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils is good. The school cares for pupils well and is successful in its inclusion of all pupils whatever their need or ability. There are sound procedures for keeping pupils safe from harm and these meet government guidance. All staff have a good understanding of pupils' pastoral needs and create a welcoming atmosphere in which pupils say they feel safe and secure. The caring ethos of the school promotes pupils' self-esteem and confidence well. Pupils know that they can talk to staff if they are troubled. Links with parents and outside agencies to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. In the past year, the school has improved the way its keeps a track of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science. This is used well to target support to specific groups, but needs further development to ensure that this good quality support is consistently provided for all pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good; consequently staff and governors share a clear vision for further improvement. The relatively new senior leadership team are very committed to building on what is good and to improving the school further. A good start has been made in monitoring pupils' progress, but there is still work to be done to ensure that the information gathered is evaluated so that it can be used effectively by teachers to plan tasks that challenge all pupils. However, the school's evaluation of itself is accurate and well founded. The school has good quality action plans to drive improvements forward: this has enabled it to sustain above and often well above average standards and good achievement for pupils. The good capacity for further improvement stems from this proven success. Governance is good. Governors support the school actively and challenge its actions. They have a good understanding of what it does well and where further improvements are possible.

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

2 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pittington Primary School, Durham, DH6 1AF

Thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school. I enjoyed meeting you and all the staff at the school. Your contributions helped me to get to know your school in a short time.

Like you, I think your school is a good school. I was pleased to hear that you enjoy school and it was good to see how well you behaved. Year 6 pupils were right to be confident that they are leaving the school with skills and abilities that stand them in good stead for life ahead.

Teachers work well to make your work interesting and fun and I know you enjoy your visits out of school to lots of exciting places. Most of you are really challenged by the tasks teachers give you, especially the older pupils who have a good understanding of how they can improve their work. I have asked your school to make sure they keep a careful check on how well you are doing and to make sure that you all have work that is always hard enough in every lesson. Your headteacher, governors and staff are also looking at ways of improving your school further and I am sure that you may well have some good ideas to help.

I wish you every success for the future.

Best wishes

Linda Buller

Lead inspector