



Gurney Pease Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114172
Local Authority Darlington
Inspection number 289825
Inspection dates 27–28 September 2006
Reporting inspector Kathryn Dodd

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Dodsworth Street
School category	Community		Darlington, County Durham
Age range of pupils	3–11		DL1 2NG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01325 380790
Number on roll (school)	198	Fax number	01325 240030
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father Grieves
		Headteacher	Mrs Sandra Battensby
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 27–28 September 2006	Inspection number 289825
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils come from nearby council and other rented housing. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many pupils leave or join the school partway through their primary education. About two-thirds of the pupils are boys. In March 2006, a new Foundation Stage unit was created when the Nursery relocated and joined the Reception class on the school premises.

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 with an accurate view of its own effectiveness. It is a friendly, welcoming and happy school that is thought of highly by pupils, their parents and the local community. Making sure that pupils enjoy learning, do as well as they can, keep safe and healthy and play an active part in the community all have a high priority in the curriculum and in the life of the school. Consequently, pupils' personal development is good and, when they leave the school in Year 6, they are well prepared for their next stage of education.

The new Foundation Stage unit (for Nursery and Reception age children) is already making a good contribution to children's good progress. Pupils throughout the school achieve well and, by the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. They are average in science and mathematics, although below average in English where, as the school has identified, writing is a weakness. This is because there are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing across all areas of their work. However, pupils' good overall academic achievement is the result of determined and successful efforts orchestrated by the headteacher and deputy headteacher to raise standards, particularly in reading and science, and to tackle previous weaknesses in teaching. Improvements to the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 and 2 and the advantages to children from attending the new Foundation Stage unit, mean that the school is now well placed to continue to drive standards up. Nevertheless, when considering the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils who do not start and finish their primary education at this school, the standards reached by pupils in Year 6 are quite an achievement. Attendance rates, as at the previous inspection, are below the national average and this hinders the academic progress of some pupils.

The key to the school's success is its good leadership and management. Leaders, managers and staff are all highly committed and hard working. They work together closely, with the best interests of pupils in mind, ensuring that the school continues on a clear path of improvement. This is a school that knows its own strengths and has identified where it can be better. It has already demonstrated good capacity to make the necessary improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide further opportunities in different subjects for pupils to practise and improve their writing.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and the pupils achieve well. Good achievement across the school reflects the good quality of teaching and learning, as well as a strong determination

to tackle previous weaknesses in pupils' achievement, particularly in reading by Year 6.

When children start Nursery, their attainment is well below what is typical for their age. Their social and emotional development, speaking and listening, reading and writing skills are poor. In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress, but only a minority attain the goals set nationally for their learning. In Years 1 to 6, girls and boys of all ages, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress, so that by the time they leave the school in Year 6, standards are average in science and mathematics but below average in English. Although standards in English are below average, they are higher in reading than in writing. Nevertheless, this picture represents good improvement since the previous inspection. During the time that they are in Years 1 and 2, the pupils achieve well but, by the end of Year 2, the 2005 national test results show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well below average. This is because the year group included a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The results of the 2006 tests show a rise in standards over the previous year, notably in mathematics. The school has set challenging targets to build further on this rise in 2007.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, helps them to achieve well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and parents appreciate this. The good personal, social and emotional development of children in the Foundation Stage ensures that they settle easily into school life. From this point, pupils grow in self-confidence and mature into young people who are prepared well for life beyond school. Pupils' achievements are valued highly and celebrated often, so that they are motivated to try hard, to do their best and to rise to the high expectations held of them. As a result, pupils behave well and show good attitudes to learning. They enjoy the opportunities they have to take on responsibilities around the school. 'Buddies' and 'mini buddies' willingly look after other pupils. They enjoy making their school a better and safer place to be. Pupils know how to keep fit and understand why it is sensible to eat healthily. Below average attendance hinders progress at school for some pupils. Despite the school's efforts to help pupils to understand the importance of regular attendance, it remains an identified priority for improvement.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Enthusiastic teaching makes a strong contribution to raising the standard of pupils' work and helping them to make good progress. Teachers plan lessons that build step by step on what they have assessed that their pupils can already do. Teachers and

teaching assistants work together as a strong team to provide consistent support. This means that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have the extra help they need to achieve as well as they can. Pupils respond well to lively and stimulating activities and rise to high expectations of them to work hard. They say that they feel challenged to achieve more. As a result, pupils make good strides in their learning, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Although teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection, there is scope to increase the proportion of good and better lessons even further, in order to raise standards, particularly by the end of Year 2. Thorough preparation, good organisation and good management of pupils' behaviour are, nevertheless, strong features of most lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well because the school gives careful consideration to providing a curriculum that meets their varying needs and helps to raise standards. Pupils say how much work in science inspires them. Many attend the science club and participate in other exciting science-related challenges offered to them. This contributes well to their good achievement, and shows in the greater proportion of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment in Year 6 national science tests. Recent investment in a new reading scheme is improving the motivation of boys for their learning. Standards in writing are not improving at the same good rate because pupils do not yet have regular opportunities to practise their writing skills across all the subjects. Enrichment of the curriculum contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of school. Visits from professionals in the community develop pupils' understanding of life beyond school and increase their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. The curriculum in the new Foundation Stage unit is well planned to give children a good start to their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils and procedures for protecting and safeguarding them are in place. Pupils say that adults help them to overcome difficulties and that they feel safe at school. Teaching assistants and learning mentors make a major contribution to this. They keep a close eye on pupils and provide immediate and sensitive support, particularly for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Teachers involve pupils in setting learning targets to aim for in lessons and, consequently, pupils have a good understanding of the purpose of their work. The school works hard to strengthen links between home and school in its efforts to raise pupils' achievement. However, it does not always ensure that parents are sufficiently clear about expectations in relation to good attendance, and not all the school's procedures are robust enough to tackle problems early and to improve pupils' chances of doing well at school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A strong sense of unity and teamwork underpins the good leadership, management and governance of the school. A strong ethos permeates the school. This is because of the very good leadership of the headteacher, who values highly the contribution of everyone and, as a result, they pull together to ensure that the school is happy, inclusive and well thought of by parents and the community. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths, and also know where it can be better. Coordinators for each phase of the school are relatively new to their roles. They know that their next step is to make a greater contribution towards improving standards in writing throughout the school and in national assessments in reading and mathematics in Year 2. The school has accurately evaluated its effectiveness. Staff and governors have pinpointed correctly the most important priorities for future improvement, and there is good capacity to meet the challenges ahead. Although standards are higher than at the previous inspection, improving attendance remains an issue for the school to tackle.

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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?	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	3
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	4
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.

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

Gurney Pease Primary School

Dodsworth Street

Darlington

County Durham

DL1 2NG

27 September 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making Mr Goodchild and me feel so welcome when we visited your school. You were all very keen to talk to us and answered all our questions really thoughtfully. Your behaviour was good and you worked hard in lessons.

Gurney Pease Primary is a good school. I can see why you told me that you enjoy it so much, and why your parents are pleased with the school. All the adults care about you and work extremely hard to help you to do well. If any of you have any problems or are upset about anything, there is always someone you can talk to get help. I am particularly pleased that you enjoy being 'Buddies' and 'Mini buddies' and that you understand that this helps you to feel happy and safe in school. You have lots of chances to do interesting and exciting things. I particularly enjoyed hearing you say how much you enjoy science and attending the science club. I can understand why you do so well in this subject.

Your headteacher, teachers, governors and the other adults that help in school are doing a wonderful job. They are working really hard to make your school even better. I have asked the school to make sure that you do as well in English, particularly in your writing, as you do in mathematics and science. I have also asked the school to make sure that you all come to school regularly. You can help your teachers by making sure that you always try your very best in all your lessons and make sure that you come to school every day and in time for the start of the school day.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Dodd

(Inspector)