

Horndale Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114190
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	289828
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Gianna Ulyatt

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	116
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Courtney
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2001
School address	Scholars Path Newton Aycliffe County Durham DL5 7HB
Telephone number	01325 300228
Fax number	01325 319235

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school, situated in the town of Newton Aycliffe. Pupils who attend come from the locality which is a mixed, but predominantly disadvantaged community where unemployment is high. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Very few are from minority ethnic families and none are learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is double the national average. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The school has part-time nursery provision for 52 children and attainment on entry to the school is well below that which is typical of three-year-olds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school is right to judge itself as outstanding. It succeeds exceptionally well in meeting the needs of all its pupils. Parents are highly appreciative of the individual care and attention their children receive and of the outstanding progress they are making. One parent explained, '...without the extra help and support the teachers give my child at Horndale, he would not be doing as well as he is. Thank you.' The school's continued success and maintenance of high quality provision are due to the total commitment and dedication of the headteacher, staff and governors.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are friendly, very proud of their achievements and comfortable with adults. They thoroughly enjoy school and even enjoy tests, as one pupil exclaimed, 'Tests are great, especially when you get a Level 3!' Older pupils willingly help out with the day-to-day running of the school and help the younger ones to settle in and understand the rules. They play amicably together in the play areas and at lunch they enjoy tasting food that is new to them. Attendance is slightly below average.

The teaching is outstanding. Its quality is the main reason why standards are well above average and achievement is excellent. The exceptional levels of care and guidance ensure that all pupils are well challenged. Parents recognise this high quality provision and one wrote, 'My child loves going to school and is enthusiastic about her teacher and her lessons.' Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. By the end of the Reception class, they meet the goals expected in all six areas and exceed them in their personal development. Progress continues at an exceptional rate in Key Stage 1. Consequently, by the end of Year 2, pupils are very competent readers, writers and mathematicians and are well prepared for their next school. The excellent curriculum extends pupils' horizons and caters well for the needs of all of them. Detailed planning takes very good account of the different levels of ability and therefore pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make exceptional progress.

The outstanding achievement of pupils is a result of high quality leadership and management. The headteacher, staff and governors believe that only the best will do for the pupils of Horndale. The school has excellent links with a wide range of outside agencies and providers in order to promote pupils' well-being. The motivated and enthusiastic staff work well as a team. Their hard work has ensured that high quality provision has been maintained. Therefore, alongside the very good improvements since the last inspection, the school has excellent capacity to improve further and offers very good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop strategies to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils achieve exceptionally well and attain standards that are well above average by the end of Year 2. Very effective and consistently good teaching ensures that progress for all pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is outstanding. When children start school their attainment is well below that of a typical three-year-old. They get off to a really good start in the Foundation Stage and make very good progress. By the end of the Reception class, they reach the early learning goals in all six areas of learning and exceed them

in their personal development and speaking skills. This impressive progress continues in Years 1 and 2 where pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills are very good for their age. The school has maintained standards in national tests, which are at least above average and often higher, for several years. This is because the teaching and the curriculum are excellent and the school consistently analyses test results and reviews provision accordingly. For example, the slight dip in standards two years ago was due to the way reading was being taught. The school quickly reviewed provision and standards have risen again.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils are friendly and show high levels of self-confidence. They express their views clearly and are very proud of their achievements. They enjoy collaborating with friends in lessons because they say, 'We have fun activities to do together and hard things to do at the same time.' They also enjoy the good range of physical activities provided after lunch and know that it is important to eat a healthy balanced diet and to drink plenty of water. The school has a Healthy School Award. Pupils take good care of each other at playtimes and the 'mini-buds' know exactly what to do if someone needs help. Older pupils explain that as part of their responsibilities they help to teach the younger ones how to behave properly in school, so everyone is safe. Pupils trust staff completely because they know how well they are cared for in school. The school is establishing a council and prospective members are currently producing well-written manifestos. Pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of education because they reach high standards in reading, writing and mathematics and have well developed information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Attendance is slightly below national average figures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is outstanding and this is why pupils make excellent progress and attain high standards. All teachers are experienced and have good knowledge of working with a variety of age groups. Teachers typically prepare pupils well for new learning. They review work from the previous day and make sure all are clear about what they are going to learn next. A strength of teaching is the way adults are always on hand to support pupils and discuss their work with them. In all lessons, teachers have high expectations and pupils concentrate and work hard to reach their targets. These steps in the learning process are so important to pupils that in some classes they call out with enthusiasm when they have reached their target. Relationships are excellent; consequently, pupils listen carefully and are very well behaved. Teachers involve pupils as much as possible in lessons and this makes learning fun for them. They plan lessons very meticulously so that the work provided matches the learning needs of all pupils. Therefore, pupils of all abilities are challenged and motivated. Most pupils work in small groups with the teacher, with very able assistants or with volunteers and this close interaction makes new learning secure. Teachers make very good use of ICT resources to inspire pupils and extend their learning. They plan so that computer-generated activities extend pupils' thinking. In a minority of lessons, pupils have to sit too long and concentration wanes for some of them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent. Its richness provides very good opportunities for pupils' personal development. The curriculum for English, mathematics and science and for personal, social and health education is planned thoroughly and makes a very good contribution to pupils' healthy lifestyle and outstanding achievement. Exemplary use is made of the first hand experiences and visits, which range from farms to places of local historical interest. These broaden pupils' horizons and inspire their ideas. Following a recent visit to a nearby play park, pupils competently explain safety issues and discuss forces and gravity with good understanding. Visitors to the school support the curriculum well and enhance learning. The visit by the 'birds of prey', for example, has resulted in outstanding drawings and a local theatre group's visit has enhanced drama skills. Stunning art displays and whole-school projects adorn the walls throughout the school and make it a very attractive learning and working environment. Enhancement clubs in art and music are very popular with pupils. Children in the Foundation Stage learn through an extensive range of practical activities that take place indoors and outside throughout the day.

The school currently uses national guidance to inform its planning. It is now considering reviewing the curriculum, in the light of new national initiatives, to make better links between subjects and to make learning and new knowledge more meaningful to pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's outstanding provision for pupils' care, guidance and support makes them successful learners. Parents are delighted with the school and realise that the staff are highly committed to ensuring that their children are happy in school. This outstanding care begins in the Nursery where the youngest children are well nurtured so that they settle happily into the school environment. The breakfast club, run by volunteer governors, provides a nutritious start to the day for many pupils. Arrangements for child protection, risk assessments and safeguarding pupils are all in place and understood by staff because they have had the relevant training. Highly-skilled staff provide excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this enables them to make outstanding progress. Pupils' academic progress is meticulously monitored and systematically reviewed so that any underachievement is quickly spotted and acted upon. Challenging targets are subsequently established through this very effective tracking of individual progress. When the school identifies groups of pupils who need an extra boost in writing, reading and mathematics, teachers provide enjoyable learning activities for them in the form of clubs at lunchtime.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher's strong and dedicated commitment to the school is one of the main reasons for its continued success. She is very well supported by caring and hardworking staff and governors. The school operates as a united team and all have a common sense of purpose to ensure that every pupil, irrespective of background or disability, achieves their very best. Although the school's self-evaluation documentation is repetitive in parts, the information gained from monitoring performance is used accurately and very effectively to identify key priorities for improvement. There is a thorough and rigorous monitoring programme in use to

ensure consistent and high quality teaching and learning in all classes. Subject leaders are highly motivated and readily train staff when implementing new ideas and strategies. Governors are experienced and knowledgeable. They are involved in the management of the school and some volunteer their services, during the school day, on a regular basis. They are well focused on supporting the school and have had recent training in monitoring provision.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	1
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
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

Horndale Infants' School

Scholars Path

Newton Aycliffe

County Durham

DL5 7HB

13 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed talking to you in your classes, in the playground and at lunchtime. You told me many interesting things about your school and why you like it so much. This has helped me to find out how your school works and what a wonderful place it is.

I was very impressed with the way you work in school. Everybody tries so hard in their lessons that I am not surprised at the fantastic progress you are making. I can see that you are very proud of yourselves whenever you reach your targets. I wonder if you know that, by the time you get to the end of Year 2, most of you are better at reading, writing and mathematics than most other seven-year-olds. How brilliant is that!

I can see that you are growing into confident young people who are ready at all times to help others. Older pupils take very good care of younger ones and help to teach them how to behave in school. This is probably why everyone feels very safe and secure in school. You told me about the new school council and, having read the candidates' manifestos, I would not know which pupils to choose, because they were all so good. The breakfast club is popular and most of you get to school in good time. However some of you take too much time off school, so I have asked the headteacher to look into it because if you are not at school, you cannot learn.

All the adults in school are very kind and caring and want the very best for you. They all work hard to make your lessons interesting and exciting. They are always thinking of new ways to make your school the great place it is. They display your work in a beautiful way and have lots of prompts around the classroom walls to help you with your spellings and numbers.

I hope you will continue to try your best at all times and continue to be a good friend to anyone who needs help.

With very best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Gianna Ulyatt

(Lead inspector)