



Sugar Hill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114207
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289834
Inspection dates 1–2 March 2007
Reporting inspector Alan Keenleyside

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sheraton Road
School category	Community		Newton Aycliffe, County Durham
Age range of pupils	3–11		DL5 5NU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01325 300334
Number on roll (school)	452	Fax number	01325 308980
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Lynn Swift
		Headteacher	Mr Frank Ridley
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2002		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 1–2 March 2007	Inspection number 289834
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspections.

Description of the school

Sugar Hill is a larger than average primary school situated close to a large industrial estate near the centre of Newton Aycliffe. Most pupils are White British. Their attainment on entry is below that expected for this age group. About 80% come from backgrounds that are socially disadvantaged. The proportion eligible for free school meals is just above the national average. More pupils than average have learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). About half of these have social, emotional, behavioural and speech or communication difficulties. There is a very small number of looked after children in the school. The school is recognised as an Investor in People and an Investor in Children.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Sugar Hill is a satisfactory school, which gives satisfactory value for money. Pupils are happy and confident and most parents are very satisfied with the quality of education and care provided. The curriculum is good and enriched by a wide range of educational visits. This is reflected in the good progress that pupils make in their personal development and well being.

Standards are below average but pupils' achievement is satisfactory. From a below average starting point in the Nursery, pupils leave the school with test results that are below the national average. Test results at the end of Key Stage 1 show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are just below the national average. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are again below average. Raising achievement is a whole school priority. Despite some year on year fluctuations, the drop in standards for 2006 was caused by the school focusing on more able pupils at the expense of the less able pupils. The school is aware of this and has taken steps to address this. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) make satisfactory progress.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. There is not enough teaching that is good or better to enable the pupils to catch up to an average standard by the time they leave. Teachers have good relationships with pupils. Instructions and explanations are clear and informative. Pupils make the best progress in literacy where they are challenged and tasks are well matched to their abilities. However, this is not always the case. In some lessons, pace and challenge are not demanding enough, particularly for the more able, and learning slows. Although the school uses assessment data to identify underachievement, it does not analyse it in sufficient detail; for example, to identify that the girls significantly out perform the boys, particularly in English. Assessment information is not used well to set individual learning targets to help pupils improve.

The good curriculum is enriched by a wide range of educational visits and sports provision. Although the school has an information and communication technology (ICT) suite, teachers make insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning. This is exacerbated by the lack of equipment in some class rooms.

The school provides well for personal development and well being and pupils make good progress in this aspect. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The successful promotion of positive attitudes to work and learning ensure that the pupils are adequately prepared for life beyond school. Fitness and healthy lifestyles are given appropriate emphasis and pupils enjoy their lessons. The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall. Pastoral care is good and the school is conscientious in implementing measures to keep pupils safe. However, the guidance and support that pupils receive to help them make progress in their work is satisfactory. This is because teachers' marking and their use of individual targets does not always give pupils a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and the senior management team demonstrate that the improvement of standards is the core business

of the school. However, leadership does not always sufficiently focus upon this aspiration. For example, the need to raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and improve the opportunities for pupils to use computers was identified in the last inspection report and remains an area for development. Although governance is satisfactory, governors are not sufficiently involved in challenging or holding the school to account. Whilst some issues from the previous inspection have been successfully tackled others remain and so the capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, particularly for the boys and all pupils in mathematics throughout the school.
- Increase the opportunities and provision for pupils to use ICT.
- Increase the involvement of the governing body especially in relation to reviewing and evaluating standards of work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average but pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enter the Nursery with attainment that is below that expected for their age. Satisfactory teaching in the Foundation Stage ensures that the pupils make satisfactory progress. When pupils enter Key Stage 1, their standards remain below average. Good teaching ensures that progress during Key Stage 1 improves so that, by the end of this key stage, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are just below the national average. Trends over time show that standards have been well below the national average up to 2005 when they improved significantly to above the national average in all three subjects but dipped in 2006 back to just below the national average due to the underperformance of boys, particularly in reading and writing.

In Key Stage 2, the 2006 results show that standards have significantly fallen in all three subjects and in the number of pupils achieving the higher levels in mathematics and science from the previous year. However, since 2003, trends over time show an improving picture in English and mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are below average. This represents satisfactory progress relative to the pupils' attainment on entry to the school.

The school has a range of assessment data, but does not analyse this in sufficient detail to identify problems such as the significant gap in performance between boys and girls, particularly in English, throughout the school. Since the last inspection, standards in ICT have improved slightly although pupils are still working below the expected level for this subject. Pupils with LDD make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development and as a result their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through assemblies, the spiritual dimension develops well. Pupils are keen to help others and willingly support community events such as entertaining residents in a local home or charitable events. They make a positive contribution to school life through such activities as membership of the school council, acting as a buddy or library monitor. Behaviour in and around school is good and pupils are polite, considerate and confident. They willingly take on responsibility and care for one another. Pupils have a confidence in their ability to make a difference to themselves. Most pupils enjoy school and develop positive attitudes to work that provide a good foundation for later life. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils know the importance of safe and healthy lifestyles and show this in the sensible choices they make for sports and healthy eating. Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with quickly when they occur. They know that there is always someone who will listen if there is a problem. Pupils' acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. These skills, together with their good social skills prepare them adequately for their future economic well-being. However, the lack of investment in ICT provision detracts from the extent to which the school prepares pupils for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with strengths in Key Stage 1 and the upper end of Key Stage 2. In Key Stages 1 and 2, lessons are well-planned and teachers share their purpose and the criteria for checking learning with pupils. In the Foundation Stage, activities are not always sufficiently carefully planned so some children do not do well as they could. Not enough check is kept on how well children progress in Nursery and Reception.

The best lessons contain a good variety of activities which, because they are carefully suited to pupils' abilities, make learning fun and are used effectively to capture and hold pupils' interest. Pupils pay good attention, contribute willingly and work hard. Many opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills through discussion work and questioning lead some to speak confidently and fluently when explaining their thinking. Pupils are taught to reflect on what they have learned. This reinforces their understanding well. Relationships between the pupils and staff are positive. In the less effective lessons, the pace of learning is slow and sometimes not enough is done to ensure that all pupils take a full part in the lesson. Activities are not always matched to the abilities of pupils, especially the more able. Pupils are not always clear what they need to do to improve and as a result their learning slows. Marking varies in quality and sometimes does not make pupils aware of what they need to do next to

improve. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills in other subjects.

Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and give invaluable support to many pupils. In particular, they help those with LDD so that they achieve as well as their classmates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. Pupils enjoy a good range of activities and experiences as they move through the school. The curriculum is enriched with exciting opportunities that motivate pupils, such as World Book day where pupils dressed as characters from their favourite books. A good range of visits and visitors contributes well to widening pupils' knowledge and improving their spiritual, social and cultural development. Many pupils take part enthusiastically in out-of-school clubs, which include a range of sports and other activities. Pupils attend a residential centre where outdoor activities contribute to their self-esteem and social development. Good working relationships with a local secondary school also have a positive impact on pupils' learning. For example, a joint contribution to an assembly for Key Stage 2 pupils strengthened their spiritual development, and the 'Tea-Time Club' gives pupils opportunities to learn about cookery using specialist secondary school facilities. Although the school has an ICT suite and a few interactive whiteboards in classrooms, pupils' ICT skills are not yet used widely enough across subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Standards of care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Pastoral care is good and pupils respond appropriately to the positive atmosphere that the school promotes. Child protection procedures are firmly established and the school works well in partnership with parents and other agencies to support pupils, especially those who need extra help. Pupils speak well of the care and support they receive from adults, with whom they enjoy good relationships. They know who they can go to talk to, trust staff and feel confident to ask for help if it is needed. Academic guidance and support is satisfactory. Marking is inconsistent and sometimes not sharp enough to help pupils understand how they can improve and achieve more. Although the school has appropriate pupil tracking systems, not all teachers use performance data effectively to guide pupils in their work to help raise achievement. Although the school has introduced individual targets for older pupils, the majority of these pupils do not have a clear understanding of their targets or the progress they are making in lessons. The targets for some pupils are not challenging enough. Pupils with LDD receive satisfactory support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management have been effective in promoting a positive social climate, good personal development and establishing good partnerships with the local community. The headteacher provides a steady steer for the school, supported by the senior management team who have raising standards at the heart of their agenda. The good ethos of care that exists across the school contributes to the good personal development of pupils and satisfactory inclusion for everyone.

School self-evaluation and development planning are satisfactory. The senior management team plays a key role in the monitoring of teaching throughout the school. There is a planned programme of monitoring involving the senior team and middle leaders. Leaders have correctly identified raising achievement in literacy, numeracy, improving ICT and the Foundation Stage as key priorities. The school is beginning to tackle shortcomings although, not all managers have a clear focus on the areas in most need of improvement. A suitable system for tracking pupils' progress has been introduced to identify underachievement. However, target setting for individual pupils is not well developed throughout the school. Day to day management of the school is good and promotes an orderly environment in which pupils make good progress in their personal development. Recent refurbishment has improved the accommodation. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. However, in ICT plans to improve provision and standards identified in the last inspection report have not been implemented on schedule. As a result, there are limited opportunities for pupils to use ICT in their learning, restricting progress. The governing body is supportive of the school and was effective in balancing the budget after one year of deficit. However, the governing body does not yet provide sufficient challenge and accountability.

The school demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve because it has successfully tackled some of the issues identified at the last inspection, such as making better provision for the more able and talented pupils and improving standards in art and design. It has a clear view of what needs to improve. However, some weaknesses still remain such as ICT which, diminish the school's overall effectiveness.

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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?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	3

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	3
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	3

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	3
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

Sugar Hill Primary School

Sheraton Road

Newton Aycliffe

County Durham

DL5 5NU

6 March 2007

Dear Children

We very much enjoyed our recent visit to your school. Thank you for making us so welcome. We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about what you liked doing.

Some of the good things we saw were your good behaviour and enjoyment of learning. You have a good curriculum and you told us all about the exciting places you visit, such as the residential centre you go to when you are older and visitors that come to your school to make learning fun. You care for others and enjoy the responsibilities that you are given as you become older such as becoming a buddy or a library monitor. You realise how important it is to eat healthily and have lots of exercise to keep fit. You told us about how well your teachers care for you.

We have asked Mr Ridley and all the staff to think about a few things to help your school become even better. Firstly they are going to help you achieve higher standards than you do at present. We have asked Mr Ridley and the teachers to improve your opportunities to use ICT so that you can develop your skills to help prepare for when you go to secondary school. Lastly, we have asked everyone concerned with the school to keep a closer eye on how well it is doing. In conclusion, we thought that you would like to know that Sugar Hill is a satisfactory school.

We hope that you will do all you can to help your headteacher and teachers improve your school. That will please everyone and help you.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Keenleyside, Lead Inspector

Graeme Clark

Joan Lock