



Applegarth Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121308
Local Authority North Yorkshire
Inspection number 292074
Inspection dates 4–5 December 2006
Reporting inspector Ralph Higgs

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Upwell Road
School category	Community		Northallerton
Age range of pupils	4–11		North Yorkshire DL7 8QF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01609 773521
Number on roll (school)	235	Fax number	01609 780521
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Craig Milner
		Headteacher	Mr Simon Ashby
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2002		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 4–5 December 2006	Inspection number 292074
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size primary school is situated in the heart of a small market town. It admits pupils from a wide variety of socio-economic contexts. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has recently gained a Healthy Schools award. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides a satisfactory and improving education. It has several good features. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Their personal development is good. Pupils are proud of their school. The school listens to what they and their parents have to say. This good partnership is contributing to the good quality of care, guidance and support provided.

Standards are beginning to rise but they have yet to meet the more challenging targets that have been set. Children enter Reception with broadly average attainment. Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. They quickly settle in and make satisfactory progress. By the time they enter Year 1, most have reached the standards expected for their age. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They make satisfactory progress to reach average standards at the end of Years 2 and 6. However, there is room for improvement in English as standards in writing have been lower than reading for several years. Few pupils reach above average standards in writing in national tests.

Parents hold the school in high regard. Typical comments include, 'There is a happy atmosphere, which encourages the children to work hard.' Pupils enjoy school, shown by their involvement in lessons and their above average attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Pupils clearly understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle, including the importance of regular exercise. They know how to keep safe and they behave sensibly around school and in the playground.

Teaching and learning is satisfactory. There is some good teaching throughout the school. However, there are inconsistencies which limit pupils' progress, caused by an unevenness in the pace and challenge of some lessons: this leads to pupils making satisfactory progress overall. The school is making strenuous attempts to improve teaching. Changes, such as encouraging pupils to talk about their work, are having a positive impact. New assessment methods are ensuring that pupils know their targets and how to improve their work. Targets are now frequently shared with parents. Despite some well planned and exciting activities, the school is aware that there is more to be done to improve the satisfactory quality of the curriculum. For example, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics. Too few links are made between subjects to help make learning more meaningful.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher leads the school with clear vision and with drive. Governors are experienced and are effective in their work. Recent appointments have strengthened the school's middle leadership, which is satisfactory. Improvement has been generally good since the last inspection. There is also an accurate appreciation of what still needs to be done. Nonetheless, the above factors, plus the energy and commitment of staff who are new to their roles, shows that the school has a good capacity to improve further. It currently gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment in all areas of writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching, providing all groups of pupils with consistently challenging work so that they achieve well.
- Improve the curriculum in all areas of the school, making more effective links between subjects to improve learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start school with broadly average skills. They make satisfactory progress and by the end of Reception most are attaining the standards expected for children of this age. They continue to make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average. Standards rose in 2006, although the proportion of pupils reaching above average levels was low. Inspection evidence shows a marked improvement in the quality and presentation of work among Year 1 and Year 2 pupils.

Achievement is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 and standards are broadly average. Results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2006 increased sharply in mathematics and science from 2005. However, the improvement in English, evident from the previous year's results, was not sustained. This was despite continuing efforts to improve standards in writing. A renewed emphasis on improving weaker aspects of writing, such as sentence structure, is showing some success in recent work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Most pupils are mature and sensible, work hard and listen attentively. A small number have yet to become self-disciplined and to conform consistently to the schools expectations. Nonetheless, pupils' regard for school is shown in their good attendance record. Pupils love gaining recognition through the school's 'instant' rewards system that acknowledges courtesy, effort and achievement.

Pupils readily take on responsibilities, such as becoming playground buddies. For example, older pupils take good care of younger ones in the Reception play area. The school council provides an effective forum for pupils of all ages to have a say in the running of their school. The council has been successful, for example, in lobbying for better playground equipment. The confidence gained in working together, and their sound basic skills, prepare pupils satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. However, there is variation in the quality of teaching between classes and some inconsistencies in approach. Common strengths in the teaching include the identification of clear learning objectives supported by detailed planning. Teaching assistants also make a valuable contribution, working with individuals and groups often in a skilful way. Recent refinements to marking are giving pupils clear pointers for improving their work in English and mathematics.

In the better lessons, work is closely matched to all pupils' needs. The demanding pace challenges pupils to do their best. In weaker lessons, tasks are sometimes inappropriate for the age of the pupils. Introductions are over-long and learning proceeds at a slow pace. In a minority of lessons, class management is not fully effective and some pupils become restless.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is appropriately planned and provides adequately for the needs of all learners. The emphasis on personal development contributes to pupils' good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles and become good citizens. Computers are used well to extend learning. A successful music initiative has been introduced in Years 4 and 5, and French is taught in Year 6. A good range of visits and visitors enriches learning. Learning opportunities have been further enhanced by exciting 'enrichment weeks' on a variety of topics.

The school has remedied the narrowness of the curriculum identified in the last inspection report. A satisfactory range of sporting activities and clubs are offered outside of normal lessons. However, the curriculum is still mainly organised as separate subjects. Few creative links are made between subjects to help pupils strengthen their learning by practising key skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils receive good levels of support from a caring staff team. There is a good emphasis on developing harmonious relationships and positive attitudes to learning. The 'Applegarth Approach' is an innovative means of promoting good behaviour through an effective system of rewards. A learning mentor gives positive support to pupils who find it hard to mix. The school takes pupils' safety very seriously. Child protection procedures are fully in place. Rigorous procedures are followed to ensure safety within school and on educational visits.

The school has established a good partnership with parents to help them support their children's learning. Effective liaison with external agencies ensures that pupils with specific needs get quick and appropriate attention. New, effective systems for tracking the progress of pupils have been established. This enables the school to provide the right level of support when it is needed. Great care is being taken to ensure that pupils understand what they need to do to reach higher standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There is satisfactory leadership and management of the school. The headteacher has forged an effective partnership with the governing body. The governors support the school well because there are robust systems of self-evaluation. For example, good use is being made of data to analyse the school's performance and to identify areas that require attention. There is a real drive for improvement. Consequently, the school has raised its sights for pupils' future achievements. Good links with other schools and agencies are in place. These are being used beneficially to extend opportunity and to help the school realise its aims.

The headteacher is managing the pace of change well. As a result, other senior and middle leaders respond positively. They are keen to apply the training in leadership skills they have been receiving, but some are new to their roles and the full impact of good management is not yet evident.

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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?	2
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	2
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	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	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?	3
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?	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	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

Thank you for welcoming us into your school. We appreciated the time you gave to us to share your views. You were very helpful. We really enjoyed listening to you singing in rehearsals on our last afternoon in school.

These are the main things we found out during our visit:

- you work hard in lessons and mostly reach the targets your teachers set you
- your school is helping you well to grow up to be mature young citizens
- your attendance is good
- you are right to say that school is enjoyable and that staff are helpful
- the school council does a good job and is helping the school to improve
- you know how to choose healthy foods and know that exercise is good for you
- the staff take good care of you and are always on hand to help
- the headteacher and governors are working hard to improve your education.

To help you even more we have asked your school to:

- help you improve your writing, but you will also have to concentrate hard to help your teachers do this
- find ways to make teaching and learning good in every lesson, and set you higher challenges
- give you more opportunities to practise your literacy and numeracy skills and to explore how subjects link together.

We enjoyed meeting and talking to you and wish you every success in the future.