



North and South Cowton Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121309
Local Authority North Yorkshire
Inspection number 292075
Inspection date 4 December 2006
Reporting inspector Ross Parker

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	North Cowton
School category	Community		Northallerton
Age range of pupils	4–11		North Yorkshire DL7 0HF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01325 378240
Number on roll (school)	32	Fax number	01325 378458
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr David Hill
		Headteacher	Mr S Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
4–11	4 December 2006	292075

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional inspector.

Description of the school

In this very small school, all the pupils are currently of White British heritage and there are currently no pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are only low numbers entitled to free school meals though the rural location includes some aspects of social and economic deprivation. The split site causes an additional management load but also brings some benefits to the younger pupils. The school has been extensively refurbished in recent years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good standard of education and good value for money. Achievement is good. Pupils work hard to progress from average standards when they come to the school and reach above average standards when they leave. Adults get to know the small numbers of pupils in each year very well and provide good support for individual needs. This enables all pupils to overcome any problems that might have hindered their learning. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and supports good achievement.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their attendance is excellent. They feel very safe and really enjoy the rich variety of experiences within the good curriculum. The adults take on flexible roles which provide outstanding care and support for pupils to mature steadily. Older pupils routinely look out for younger pupils' welfare; they also help to ensure the smooth day to day running of assemblies, lessons and play times. Pupils explain that they have excellent opportunities to contribute their opinions through the school council, and through the reports they write for the school newsletter. Their independence and opportunities to work in small groups prepare them very well for future economic well-being. So do the frequent opportunities to use information and communications technology (ICT). Carefully planned science lessons, including the 'Funky Food' project, ensure that they understand about healthy living. The range of sports fixtures and lively play times with an adult play leader ensure that they enjoy leading active lives.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development shows through their positive attitudes in assembly and in their work in religious education. Moral and social development can be seen in their contributions in lessons, and the respect which older pupils show for those who are younger. For example, a boy from Year 3 was applauded as man of the match after a recent Year 5 and 6 football fixture. Cultural development is strong in many respects, and contributes well to the good quality curriculum. Pupils have experienced learning Japanese or Spanish, participated in a Japanese play, and prepared art works in the style of Van Gogh.

Teaching and learning are good. The well-established teaching and support team are continually seeking ways to improve provision further. They monitor each other's work, and gather new ideas from other schools. They are currently exploring more ways to use ICT to enhance motivation and independence. They are making good progress, but recognise that this is a relatively harder task in a small school.

Leadership and management are good. The whole staff shares the headteacher's clear vision and powerful drive for improvement. Governors have a very good range of relevant experience and, together with the headteacher, have reached a very clear evaluation of the school. They recognise that managing a small school on a split site can involve disproportionate amounts of administration. They are working together to streamline these tasks and divert more time to teaching. The school responded well to issues from the previous report, and has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the use of computers and electronic white boards to make lessons even more enjoyable and to give pupils more opportunities to be independent.
- Refine and reduce administrative tasks to increase the time available for teaching, sharing ideas, and moderating work across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average when pupils come in to the Foundation Stage, though some have more limited social and cultural development. They make good progress because they have good opportunities to learn from older pupils. They also benefit from a stimulating environment. This includes computer programmes to reinforce skills such as data handling; they also have good opportunities to learn through playing. By the end of Year 2, standards vary from average to above average, depending on the differing abilities of each year group. They were above average in the last two years. Reading is the strongest area, and pupils are reaching higher levels than expected nationally. Writing is generally average, but was above average in the last two years. Numeracy standards are average. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well and standards have been above average over recent years. Even though a very small year group gained lower levels in 2006, their achievement was good. English and maths have been more usually above average, with science results consistently in line with national expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The small family atmosphere gives older pupils real responsibility as they act as role models for younger pupils. This happens in lessons where behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. It also happens at lunch times, when the school welcomes children from the local pre-school group. Pupils develop confidence rapidly, and the separate buildings mean that those in Year 2 have the experience of being the oldest and most responsible on the site. They respond to this very positively, working independently, and collaborating well in small groups. The ratio of adults to children is good and the adults actively encourage pupils' independence. They judge carefully when to intervene, and when to sit back and observe the activity. This pattern of behaviour continues as they move up through the school but even in Year 6, pupils can enjoy being children as they play a frantic game of 'tig' in the playground. Some aspects of cultural awareness are inevitably limited by the locality. The school is developing links with a partner school in a very different social context to remedy this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Well-established classroom routines and excellent relationships mean that pupils have wonderful attitudes to learning. Teachers plan their lessons well to provide appropriate levels of challenge for the different groups of pupils. They make good use of the different groupings within each class to provide additional challenge for more able pupils, or a chance to go back over insecure ground for others. This showed clearly when, for instance, a boy in Year 5 matched the work of Year 6 pupils when using connectives to show the passage of time in his writing. Teachers provide good opportunities for independent work, and the way they work with support staff means that help is always on hand if pupils need it. This enables all pupils to learn effectively. However, a greater use of whiteboards and computers in teaching would enhance pupils' enjoyment and promote their independent learning skills. They mark work thoroughly, and give clear guidance so that pupils know how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned to give coverage of all aspects of the national curriculum, and keeps a strong emphasis on basic skills. It gives a balance of attention to different subjects over time, and enhances this with specific focus weeks. Looking at subjects such as Trafalgar or Japan in depth continues to develop a range of study skills whilst supporting pupils' engagement and contributing to their very high levels of enjoyment. Other initiatives capitalise on the skills of visiting students from other countries as well as support staff to develop pupils' cultural awareness and their knowledge of health issues. Enrichment is particularly strong. Extensive sporting activities, regular after school clubs including art and ICT, and a wide range of visits make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The team of adults knows the pupils and their individual needs very well. Arrangements to ensure their safety are fully in place, and governors monitor day to day procedures carefully. Teachers follow each pupil's progress closely and their regular marking gives clear feedback on how to improve. They use formal tests to refine their own assessments of each pupil's starting point and progress through each year. They encourage pupils to begin setting their own targets for improvement whilst they are in the Reception year. They also use an ICT system to give an overview of all the pupils and provide an extra alarm if any one is not making sufficient progress. They are fully aware of the small number of pupils whose progress cause concern. They make good use of support staff and additional adults to meet their particular needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since the last inspection, the school has extended the curriculum and reduced the time lost between the two sites. It has also significantly improved communication with parents through newsletters, a website and a well planned prospectus. These give helpful details on issues such as the homework policy, special events and sporting achievements. The school is about to start using a more precise system for telling parents how well pupils are doing. Parents say they are pleased with developments over recent years, and that their children are happy in school. However, administrative tasks are time consuming which limits the time spent on improving school provision. Buildings have been extended and refurbished. Resources have been updated, and the curriculum enhanced. Much of this is a result of the outstanding links with universities, The British Council, and other schools. The headteacher has been energetic and imaginative in these developments which compensate for the size and relative isolation of the school. Pupils have benefited through visits and additional staff. Adults have benefited from the chance to exchange ideas and keep up to date. All of this is well supported by a governing body that is heavily involved in supporting and monitoring the daily life of the school.

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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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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?	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.

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	1
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

Thank you all for the friendly welcome you gave me when I came to visit your school recently. I really enjoyed meeting you, and having the chance to talk to you.

Here are some of the really good things about your school

- The way you behave and enjoy your lessons and play times.
- Your excellent attendance.
- The way that you are kind to other people. You look after those who are younger than you are and set them a good example.
- The way all of the grown ups look after you so you feel safe.
- Your headteacher and all your teachers and teaching assistants work together to make sure your school keeps getting even better!
- The links that the school has with places like Japan and Spain, and with other schools. They really help to make your time in school more interesting.

What I have asked the school to do to make it even better

- To find more ways to use the computers and the electronic white boards to make your lessons even more enjoyable, and to give you more opportunities to be independent.
- To make sure that the office work and paper work takes as little time as possible so that there is more time for teaching and helping you to learn.

Thank you for helping with the inspection of your school. I hope that you continue to really enjoy school and do very well with your work.