



Alnwick South First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122172
Local Authority Northumberland
Inspection number 292329
Inspection date 11 January 2007
Reporting inspector Margaret Shepherd

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Type of school | First | School address | The Avenue |
| School category | Community | | Alnwick, Northumberland |
| Age range of pupils | 3-9 | | NE66 1UL |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01665 602267 |
| Number on roll (school) | 201 | Fax number | 0165 603413 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Dr Alan Fortune |
| | | Headteacher | Mrs Jenny Smith |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 May 2001 | | |

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|-------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves an area with very mixed social and economic circumstances. Several families choose to travel from out of the catchment area to ensure that their children attend the school. Several of these children have statements of special educational needs and the school has a higher proportion of these children than average. The school is of average size. Children enter the Nursery with standards that are broadly average with a very wide range of ability. There are 16% more boys than girls in the school. A very small proportion of pupils have English as an additional language and an equally small proportion of pupils are looked after.

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 outstanding features. Parents appreciate what the school does for their children. Children make an excellent start in the Nursery due to the high quality teaching and curriculum in this class. Achievement is good throughout the rest of the school and by the time pupils leave the school standards are above average in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing are well above average due to very good quality strategies that the school uses to develop pupils' learning in this aspect of English. The school is keen to raise the above average standards in reading in order to match the writing standards. It has introduced a good range of strategies to do this but it is too early for them to have had an impact on standards. The school is extremely successful at enabling all pupils to have full access to everything that is happening in school. The provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is outstanding and their achievement is excellent.

The school provides a very stimulating range of opportunities for pupils to develop their personal skills within the context of the local community. This results in outstanding personal development and well-being. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. They thoroughly enjoy their lessons and join in enthusiastically in the stimulating range of activities out of formal school time. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's lively programme of local and multi-cultural events extends this aspect of pupils' understanding extremely well and ensures that they make high quality contributions to the community. They are very well prepared for their future economic well-being through the development of basic skills and in areas such as learning to work together in teams.

Teaching and learning are good with outstanding features. Teachers work in a very productive partnership with teaching assistants. They give clear explanations in whole class sessions but do not give pupils enough opportunities to talk in order to extend their speaking and listening skills. The school's assessment systems are good but there are not enough opportunities in lessons for pupils to assess their own learning. The curriculum is of good quality and is excellent in art and design and drama. This focus on creativity results in pupils achieving levels that are higher than expected for their age.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher leads and manages her staff well. The senior leadership team work very effectively with each other and with the good quality governing body. The school has a good understanding of what is working well and what needs attention. Consequently, improvement since the previous inspection is good and the school has a good capacity to improve. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills in whole class sessions.

- Extend the involvement of pupils in assessing their own learning.
- Evaluate the impact of the new reading strategies on pupils' progress, and refine them in the light of the evaluation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall achievement is good. Children enter the school with standards that are broadly average but with a very wide range of abilities. Due to the excellent Nursery provision they make an outstanding start to their schooling and achieve extremely well in this class. Standards at the end of Reception are above the expected level.

Good teaching and the rich curriculum throughout the rest of the school result in good progress and achievement. The results of national assessments show that standards at the end of Year 2 have been steadily rising over the past five years and are above average in reading and mathematics. The inspection confirms these standards. Standards in writing are well above average. This is due to a range of successful strategies that the school uses to develop these skills. These include capitalising on exciting experiences for pupils to use as a basis for writing, producing different types of writing, such as poetry, and regular handwriting practice. Pupils consolidate their learning in the junior classes and achieve well. The high standards in writing are sustained. The school is keen to raise the above average standards in reading to match the standards in writing. There is a strong emphasis on the creative curriculum throughout the school and results in standards that are higher than expected in these areas of learning.

Achievement of pupils with statements of special educational needs is outstanding. These pupils receive very carefully planned provision to match their particular needs and high quality support from teaching assistants. More able pupils make consistently good progress, as do the looked after pupils and those with English as an additional language. The school has worked hard to meet the needs of boys and their achievement is as good as the girls and often better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school has a strong commitment to supporting each individual's personal development. This results in outstanding personal development. Pupils have an excellent understanding of keeping safe and healthy. Year 4 pupils were proud to take the Healthy Schools assessor round the school and this contributed to the successful achievement of this award. Pupils are extremely positive about their school. They respond enthusiastically to the interesting lessons that staff provide and really appreciate the many after school clubs. Their behaviour is excellent. They are extremely sensitive towards each other, particularly the pupils with statements of special educational needs. Attendance rates are above average. Pupils take a great pride in their contributions to the community. They appreciate the buddy system and older

pupils thoroughly enjoy looking after the younger children. Pupils' involvement in local events, such as cultural events at Alnwick Gardens, extends their understanding of their role in the community very well. They have an excellent understanding of their own and other cultures, and their spiritual, moral and social development are all outstanding. They are very well prepared for their future economic well-being as they develop very good basic skills and learn to work collaboratively and support others, such as working at a stall at the annual Alnwick Fayre.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are consistently good throughout Reception to Year 4 and excellent in the Nursery. Teachers work in a very close and extremely successful partnership with teaching assistants, which has a very positive impact on the achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Teachers are skilful in supporting individuals in learning basic skills. They give clear explanations in whole class sessions but do not consistently ensure that pupils have enough time to extend their speaking skills. Staff use the school's assessment systems well in lessons and tailor work effectively to pupils' needs. Marking is thorough but does not consistently show pupils how to improve or encourage them to assess their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good and well balanced curriculum and this contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of school. The writing curriculum is excellent but the school has identified gaps in their reading curriculum. They have introduced several very good quality strategies to extend the reading curriculum, but it is too early for this to have had an impact on pupils' progress. The curriculum for creative development is excellent with some extremely innovative daily and weekly projects resulting in performance in national venues, such as the Sage. The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is high quality and is carefully organised to match their particular needs. For example, a teaching assistant trained with a physiotherapist and now works with pupils to extend their physical development. The curriculum for personal development is excellent and has a very positive impact on pupils' learning in this aspect of their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There is a strong emphasis on staff working together to support and care for individuals. The school works in high quality partnerships with parents and outside agencies to promote pupils' well-being. The open door policy for parents at the beginning and end of school sessions works extremely well and pupils settle quickly and happily into

their lessons. Safeguarding systems are in place. There are excellent procedures for managing behaviour, particularly for pupils with behavioural disabilities. Monitoring of pupils' progress is good and any underachievement is identified and action taken to remedy the difficulties. Those pupils needing extra help are well supported as is evident in the high quality care and support, which is particularly valuable for vulnerable pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers work well together to take the work of the school forward. They all have a high level of commitment to providing high quality provision for personal development and in this aspect they are outstanding. The headteacher analyses data well and uses it to identify areas for improvement, such as reading. The school has not yet evaluated the new reading innovations to identify the impact on pupils' progress. The headteacher monitors teaching and learning effectively, deploys staff efficiently and supports them well in their professional development. The senior leadership team is very well established and each member has clear roles and responsibilities. Governors work in close partnership with the school and have a good range of different expertise that they use well to extend the school's work. They share the headteacher's vision of providing a highly inclusive education for all. Self-evaluation systems are good. This has ensured that the school has made good improvement since the previous inspection and has a good capacity for future improvement.

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Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| 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

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|--|---|
| 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 | 1 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| 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? | 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

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| 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

Alnwick South First School

The Avenue

Alnwick

Northumberland

NE66 1UL

15 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for being so welcoming to me when I came to your school. You were all so friendly and helpful in answering my questions.

I was really impressed with your writing. You work hard at making your handwriting neat and in writing about lots of different interesting things. You all make good progress, which is particularly good in the nursery. You have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy and you do lots of really interesting things out in your community. The older pupils look after the younger pupils with great care. You are getting ready for your future lives really well. I was so impressed that you help to run a stall at Alnwick Fayre. Your teachers work really well with your teaching assistants. You have a really interesting curriculum, particularly in creative activities. I thought the displays in the hall and around the school were excellent. Your staff work really hard to make sure that you are safe and secure. Your headteacher knows you all very well and so do your governors.

I think that you are doing really well. You could do even better by being given more opportunities to speak to each other when you are working together as a whole class. I think it would also help if you understood how well you are doing in your learning. I was very impressed with the changes that your teachers have made to your reading and the school is going to check how well these changes are working.

I really enjoyed my visit to your school and I hope that you all do your best in the future to make it an even better place to learn.

Yours sincerely

Maggi Shepherd

Inspector