



Cambois First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122179
Local Authority Northumberland
Inspection number 292332
Inspection dates 15–16 February 2007
Reporting inspector Andrew Scott

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

Type of school	First	School address	Cambois
School category	Community		Blyth, Northumberland
Age range of pupils	3–9		NE24 1RD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01670 825218
Number on roll (school)	57	Fax number	01670 825218
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Graeme Stewart
		Headteacher	Mrs Denise Brewis
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2001		

Age group 3–9	Inspection dates 15–16 February 2007	Inspection number 292332
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school in a coastal village of considerable social and economic disadvantage. Nearly all pupils are from White British families and a few are from Traveller families. There is quite a high turnover in the pupil population but this varies from year to year. The same is true of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Usually there is a high percentage although, currently, it is close to average. The school holds the Quality Mark for Basic Skills 3 and awards for Investors in People and Healthy Schools.

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. The school has a very special atmosphere in which pupils are highly valued and extremely well cared for. As a result, they prosper in their personal development and do well in their work. Parents are delighted with the school. Their questionnaires revealed complete satisfaction with all aspects of its provision. Furthermore, the school lies at the heart of the local community and its activities greatly benefit pupils and residents alike.

Pupils develop into friendly, responsible and sociable individuals. They look out for one another, ready to help whether the problem is a computer operation, an awkward adjective or a hurt knee. They enjoy school, work hard in lessons and take part enthusiastically in the many extra activities. They adopt a very sensible approach to a healthy lifestyle, knowing the benefits of, for example, raw carrots and cycling. Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. Overall, pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Children usually begin school with attainment below that typical for their age; they are especially weak in language and mathematical development. They make rapid progress through the Nursery and Reception classes because of high expectations and stimulating activities, mostly reaching the goals expected of five-year-olds. Pupils make good progress between Years 1 and 4 and standards rise. Attainment fluctuates because of the small size of the year groups and the movement of the pupil population. Standards by Year 2 were above average in 2006. By Year 4, pupils' attainment was broadly average, although their performance in mathematics was below the expected level for the county.

Teaching is good overall, and outstanding in the Nursery and Reception classes. Teachers plan well to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities in lessons and to match work to pupils' abilities. They give good advice to pupils about how to improve their work although marking in books does not consistently reinforce this. In addition, teachers do not always expect enough from pupils or provide sufficient scope for learning independently. The good curriculum is strengthened by an interesting variety of activities, visits and visitors.

The school is in very good hands. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher generates the excellent atmosphere that pervades the school and keeps it vibrant. She motivates staff, governors and pupils alike to work well together to develop the school. Action plans reflect the school's most pressing needs but do not show clearly enough what pupils are expected to gain. Excellent partnerships with outside agencies are fostered to benefit pupils in, for example, dance, ecology and behavioural issues. The school has improved well in recent years through systematic staff training, better accommodation and resources, as well as higher standards. In view of this and the combined will to succeed, the school is well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attainment in mathematics by Year 4.

- Ensure that pupils in Years 1 to 4 are fully challenged in lessons and have ample opportunity to develop independent learning skills.
- Improve plans for development so that they are more specific and closely linked to pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Attainment on entry is variable.

Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are below average and often quite low, especially in early language, number and creative development.

Because of very effective, sharply focused teaching, children make excellent progress and usually reach all the goals expected of them by the end of the Reception year.

Between Years 1 and 4, pupils make good progress but standards fluctuate because of the small number of pupils in each year group. By Year 2, standards have clearly improved in recent years in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2005, they were average and rose to above average in 2006, reflecting in part the relatively small percentage of pupils with learning difficulties.

By Year 4, pupils' attainment has tended to be lower than county averages until 2006 when it improved in reading and writing to a level expected of nine-year-olds. However, attainment in mathematics was below the expected level, following a recent downward trend. The subject has suffered to some extent from the school's pronounced focus on literacy and because of weaknesses in problem-solving. School records show that pupils in the current Year 4 are making better progress. Traveller pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make equally good progress as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' progress in their personal development is outstanding. Pupils become very polite, responsible individuals who get on extremely well with one another and staff. As one pupil said, 'We are all one big happy family.' Behaviour is not perfect but it is extremely good and ensures the safety of other pupils. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school acknowledges that pupils' knowledge of the wider world, although good, could be better.

Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils clearly love their school and enjoy learning. They generally sustain good concentration and listen well in lessons. Around school, they are confident, relaxed and take part eagerly in healthy activities, such as cycling and playground games. They also are very alert to the importance of sensible diet and increasingly opt for healthy options at lunchtime.

Whole school meetings automatically include pupils in many decisions for developing the school. Pupils also make a distinct contribution to the local community through, for example, annual tree-planting and taking on senior citizens at dominoes and snakes

and ladders. This strong social development means that pupils are well set for life ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are consistently effective. Classrooms are happy places and the excellent rapport between staff and pupils enables pupils to work willingly. Pupils learn well because lessons have a very clear focus and learning builds progressively. Teachers explain new concepts well and ask appropriate questions to check and extend understanding. Support for Traveller pupils and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is sensitive and effective.

Teachers plan thoughtfully for the different groups of pupils, especially to cater for the different year and ability groups. Teachers are good at assessing pupils' progress but do not consistently pitch the level of challenge high enough so that all pupils are extended. Some pupils said that at times they find the work quite easy. In addition, teachers do not always provide pupils with enough scope for independent learning which links to the weaknesses in problem-solving in mathematics. By contrast, in the Foundation Stage, a high level of challenge produces considerable motivation and swift learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with a real strength in its inclusion of all pupils. The mobility of the pupil population makes it hard for teachers to ensure continuity of provision for pupils; nevertheless, they succeed. Teachers make sure that all pupils benefit from all activities, including Traveller pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The extra activities are varied and plentiful for such a small school and enrich pupils' experiences greatly.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding, because of the range and quality of hands-on activities and level of adult support. There is good emphasis on literacy, numeracy and other key subjects throughout the school. Pupils have ample scope to develop language and computer skills through other subjects, although similar opportunities are not so common in mathematics. The extensive and well-maintained facilities are a great boost to learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's care for its pupils is exemplary. The wonderfully warm and supportive atmosphere is central to the school's success. Staff place high value on the pupils' safety and well-being, and this is greatly appreciated by parents. Staff know pupils

extremely well as individuals and so are very sensitive to particular needs and are thoroughly trained in supporting them. Formal procedures for safeguarding pupils are scrupulous and rigorously kept up-to-date. All adults in contact with the school have been fully vetted and the school building is extremely secure.

Teachers also have a very good knowledge of pupils' academic progress, and can see at a glance whether pupils are underachieving and require extra help. Pupils benefit from individual targets on how to improve their performance in literacy and numeracy, although not all pupils readily recall what these are.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The overall leadership of the school is good. However, the individual leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. While championing a communal approach, she provides the energy and driving force to improve the school decisively. Her admirable philosophy ensures that pupils receive a carefully balanced education in a stimulating and secure environment. She is well supported by her staff and governors.

Management at all levels is good. The school generally has a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses and knows what it needs to do to improve. Its action plans focus on the most important issues, although these are not always detailed enough so that staff know exactly what they need to do and how it will benefit pupils. Similarly, teachers' skills are evaluated well but the quality of teaching is not measured enough by how much progress pupils make.

Governance is good. Governors are very supportive, knowledgeable and ensure a healthy budget. Their monitoring of the school's progress is effective but not always sharp enough so that issues, such as attainment by Year 4, are top of their agenda. Links with parents and the community are excellent. The school has succeeded in involving parents more and more in their children's education and, in turn, parents are extremely pleased with the school.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in raising standards, especially in English, and in improving the accommodation, staff training and computer resources. The school is well placed with good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

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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	1
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	3
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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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

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

Cambois First School

Cambois

Blyth

Northumberland

NE24 1RD

16 February 2007

Dear pupils

I thoroughly enjoyed my recent visit to your school and meeting you. I am writing to thank you for helping me to get to know your school very well in such a short space of time.

You can certainly be proud of your school and of yourselves. You have a good school with some excellent features. There is a wonderful atmosphere in the school because teachers want the best for you and value you as individuals. You respond very well to this. Your behaviour is extremely good, you get on with one another exceptionally well and you know how to lead a safe, sensible and healthy life. I understand why you enjoy all the many activities in and out of lessons. Your attendance is satisfactory but could be better.

You achieve well in your work, especially in the Nursery and Reception classes. Standards have risen in recent years, although your work in mathematics is not as good as it should be by Year 4. Teachers give you interesting work and explain new learning well, although sometimes the work they provide is not hard enough. Some of you told me that your work was quite easy. Teachers know now they need to make sure that all your work allows you to make good progress at your own pace. You can help by working hard throughout lessons, especially when you don't have an adult helping you.

Your headteacher is excellent in making the school both welcoming and secure, bringing in new ideas for the school and involving you in the running of the school. Your links with your community are outstanding. I particularly like the photographs of some of you playing games with some senior citizens and of 'The Fisherman's Dream' activity on the beach, as well as the fundraising for a local hospice. I know your parents think highly of the school.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

School inspector