



Otterburn First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122215
Local Authority Northumberland
Inspection number 292340
Inspection date 17 January 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	Otterburn
School category	Community		Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	4-9		NE19 1JF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01830 520283
Number on roll (school)	44	Fax number	01830 520283
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Andrew Shone
		Headteacher	Mr Geoffrey Raffle
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2001		

Age group 4-9	Inspection date 17 January 2007	Inspection number 292340
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very small school serves the comparatively isolated village of Otterburn and the surrounding area. Socio-economic conditions are below average, although few pupils are eligible for free school meals. Virtually all pupils are from White British families; two pupils speak English as an additional language. Movement within the pupil population is lower than average. There are no pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or looked-after pupils. The school hosts a facility for pre-school children for three sessions a week.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Otterburn First School is a good school. It has a happy, caring family atmosphere in which pupils feel secure, are motivated to work and develop well as individuals. They get on with one another very naturally, behave responsibly and are sensible in managing their own lifestyle through, for example, a healthy diet. They enjoy learning and generally work hard in lessons. They take a pride in their work and appreciate teachers' advice on how to improve further. Parents endorse their children's view of the school and praise its positive ethos in particular.

Teaching is good throughout the school and so pupils achieve well, usually attaining above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This provides pupils with a good platform towards future success. Children benefit from good provision in the Reception year. They tend to start school with skills and abilities that are below average, especially in language, but make good progress to achieve the goals expected of five-year-olds by the time they enter Year 1. This good progress continues throughout the school, although standards fluctuate a little from year to year because of the very small year groups. Standards attained are usually above average.

Classrooms are positive places to be. Teachers know pupils well and so set work that is in the main suitably challenging despite the difficulties of mixed year classes. In some lessons, however, the pace of learning and the challenge provided for more able pupils is not good enough. As a result, although they achieve reasonably well they do not always reach high enough standards. In lessons, teachers explain learning objectives and new concepts clearly so that pupils readily understand the work. There is a strong focus on the key skills of literacy and numeracy and the school is beginning to promote these through other subjects. There are also some special themed activities that certainly excite pupils, but the school does not diversify the curriculum enough on a regular basis to enrich pupils' experiences. For example, their knowledge of multi-cultural society is limited.

The headteacher provides good leadership and shares a clear vision with staff and the governing body. He has enabled the school to make good progress over recent years. Open communication among staff ensures that the school has an accurate view of its strengths and how it can improve. However, there are few formal systems for monitoring to ensure, for example, that teaching is effective enough so that more able pupils always reach the standards of which they are capable. Nevertheless, the school is in good shape and continues to maintain good standards. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistent pace and challenge in all lessons.
- Create a more diverse and stimulating curriculum.
- Establish formal systems to monitor and assess the progress of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well by the time they leave the school. Children begin school with skills and abilities that tend to be below those typical for their age, especially in language development. They make good progress through the Reception year, especially in language, so that they achieve all of the goals expected of them.

By Year 2, standards in the national tests are usually above average. Results fluctuate because of the small number of pupils in each year group. In 2005, standards in the national tests were broadly average, but in 2006 pupils' performance was higher. Pupils usually achieve the expected levels but more able pupils do not consistently achieve highly in all subjects.

By Year 4, pupils sustain good progress and their attainment is usually above expectations. In 2006, attainment was broadly in line with expectations but the school's records show that attainment for the current year is better. As with younger pupils, too few pupils achieve higher levels in the assessment tests. There is no significant disparity between the achievements of girls and boys, and pupils with English as an additional language achieve as well as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils develop well as individuals. They love coming to school, as their consistently high attendance testifies. They respect their teachers and enjoy their learning. They become mature, thoughtful and self-reliant pupils in their time at school. They act responsibly, are well-behaved and considerate. Pupils of all ages get on well with one another in the playground.

They develop well culturally through good opportunities in singing, dancing and art, but their awareness of multi-cultural society is limited. The school is currently taking good steps to overcome this through links with a multi-ethnic urban school. Although pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Pupils pursue a healthy lifestyle through a sensible diet and know the value of exercise, although the school does not offer many extra sports and outdoor activities. Pupils contribute well to the school and wider community; for example, through work on the school council and environmental projects with the Northumbria National Park. Preparation for future economic well-being is good, because of competent academic and social skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good throughout the school. There are similar strengths in each classroom, notably the relaxed and focused atmosphere prompted by the close rapport between teachers and pupils. Teachers make lesson objectives clear so that pupils know exactly what they need to learn. All pupils are constantly encouraged to take part and are given ample time to reflect on their answers; although this does tend to slow the pace of learning at times.

Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' abilities and so plan well to meet their needs, especially to allow for the mixed year classes. Teachers provide a good level of challenge for the most part, although sometimes more able pupils do not have the scope to work at their own speed. Teachers have good expectations of pupils particularly with regard to presentation and precision. However, pupils do not always complete enough work in lessons because teachers do not insist on tight deadlines.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is suitably linked to recognised schemes of work so there is a strong structure in all subjects. There is a sensible and flexible approach to the mixed year classes, so that pupils often benefit from work that matches their abilities and not just their age. However, the school does not diversify the curriculum enough on a regular basis to enrich pupils' experiences. Curriculum provision for pupils' personal development is good; as a result, pupils effectively develop the personal skills that will stand them in good stead for life ahead. There is some good enrichment through extra activities, such as visits to Hadrian's Wall, and specialist visitors such as music and art teachers. There is also some good cross-curricular activity to promote literacy and numeracy in particular, for example, the Victorian project but this is not typical of everyday teaching.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils. Effective formal systems are in place to safeguard pupils and regular staff training takes place in, for example, child protection and first aid. The pastoral care is very good. Staff know pupils individually and work closely with outside agencies to address any specific need. Pupils say they feel safe and are very comfortable about approaching staff if they have any problems.

The school keeps a good record of pupils' academic progress. This enables teachers to give extra support as necessary to pupils. There is no formal system of setting curricular targets for pupils since teachers prefer to give direct advice to pupils while

marking their work. This is good practice, but as the guidance is not written down, overtime, pupils do not readily recall what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides clear and decisive leadership. He ensures that the school's aims are rightly focused not only on academic achievement but also on pupils' personal development. The strong family ethos within the school stems from a close-knit staff, keen to play a full part in the school's development and also to develop professionally. For example, all staff have worked together with governors to evaluate the school's work. As a result, they have a broadly accurate view of what the school does well and how it could be improved.

Despite this, the quality of management is satisfactory because too much of it is carried out informally. There is no formal structure to ensure that teaching is assessed rigorously, one of the reasons why the occasional lack of pace and challenge for more able pupils has not been addressed. The school improvement plan is satisfactory. Priorities are appropriate but not firmly rooted in analysis or linked tightly enough to pupils' achievement.

Governance is good. Although most governors are new, they know the school well, are very supportive and increasingly hold the school to account. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. It has addressed the key issues well, maintained the good standards and other aspects and has also improved attendance. Therefore, it has good capacity to improve and 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?	2
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?	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	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?	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?	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

Otterburn First School

Otterburn

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE19 1JF

17 January 2007

Dear Children

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school. I enjoyed meeting you and all the staff at the school. Your contributions certainly helped me to get to know your school in a short time.

Like you, I think your school is a good school. I know how much you enjoy your work and that you work hard to achieve well in your subjects in every class. You respect your teachers and are responsible in lessons. You behave well around school and I particularly liked the happy, family atmosphere that you help to create by looking after one another so well. As a result, you leave school with skills and abilities that stand you in good stead for life ahead.

Teachers work well to make your work in lessons challenging, most of the time. I know you appreciate their advice when you mark your work together and that you try hard to be neat and accurate in your written work. Your headteacher, helped by all staff and governors, has your best interests at heart and makes sure that the school is a safe and secure place to be, as well as providing some exciting activities.

I have suggested that you should have more of these activities, like the Victorian project, because you are certainly motivated by them. I have also asked the school to make sure that your work is always hard enough so that you can all achieve even better results in your work. Your headteacher is also looking at ways of improving your school further and you may well have some good ideas to help.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

School Inspector