



Ponteland First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122217
Local Authority Northumberland
Inspection number 292342
Inspection date 28 September 2006
Reporting inspector Moira Fitzpatrick

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

Type of school	First	School address	North Road
School category	Community		Ponteland, Newcastle upon Tyne
Age range of pupils	3–9		Tyne and Wear, NE20 9UH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01661 822103
Number on roll (school)	306	Fax number	01661 822117
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Maureen Milne
		Headteacher	Mrs Lynn Blain
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average, with over half of the pupils coming from outside the school's catchment area. The majority are from White British backgrounds, with a little over ten per cent from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Asian British. Just over 5% speak English as an additional language and most are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is about average; so too is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs. The attainment of pupils when they start school is below what is typical for three-year-olds, especially in their personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy skills. The school is about to move into new accommodation, which is timely, as the current accommodation is cramped for the numbers of pupils in many classes.

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 where standards are above average and pupils achieve well. Parents work in close partnership with the school and rightly praise it for how well their children progress, both academically and personally. They and their children see the school as a welcoming place where 'all are happy, valued and feel secure'. Consistently good care and guidance, including careful monitoring of pupils' learning, ensure that this is so. Pupils' personal development is outstanding because of the caring support and very effective guidance they receive, and because of their own enthusiasm and willingness to take on all that is on offer. Pupils are confident, have mature attitudes and make an outstanding contribution to both the school and the wider community. The school council plays a significant role in improving aspects of the school, so that other children are confident that their ideas are listened to and acted upon. As one Year 4 pupil commented, 'Well if you wanted to make something happen, such as mirrors in the toilets, the school council would do that'. And they did in the last school year, along with many other innovations to make school life better for the pupils. Behaviour is consistently good and in some cases exemplary. Pupils show great consideration for the right of others to enjoy learning, are very good listeners and cooperate with each other willingly in lessons. These qualities, together with the rich curriculum they receive, prepare them well for the next stage of learning.

Most pupils make good progress in lessons because teaching is well planned, is based on a thorough knowledge of the pupils' needs and teachers have high expectations of what the pupils can do. Occasionally, when additional adult support is not available for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or for those whose first language is not English, their progress is satisfactory rather than good. Varied teaching methods and active involvement of pupils at all stages in lessons produce a buzz of excited learning, reflecting their evident enjoyment of what they are doing. Consistently good teaching results in above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. The exception is for some of the boys whose performance in reading is quite a way below that of girls. Standards and provision in the Foundation Stage are good overall, and in the current Reception classes they are exceptionally good. This is because the expectations, planning and quality of teaching are consistently very high. Parents are delighted with the start their children have and several commented on how reluctant their nursery aged children were to leave at the end of the session.

Leadership and management of the school are good and the school gives good value for money. A thorough evaluation of the school's work, by staff and governors, ensures there is an accurate picture of its effectiveness. The capacity to improve is good: the school has analysed performance, accurately identified what needs to be improved and is well served by the skills of the headteacher and deputy headteacher to bring about further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in reading for boys so they achieve as much as the girls.

- Further increase the rate of progress for the few pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those who have English as an additional language when additional adult support is not available.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. The school's performance in national tests in reading writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 has been consistently above the national average since the last inspection. A slight dip in the trend of improvement in mathematics has been remedied quickly, resulting in significantly improved standards across the school. The impact on this year's test results is that all pupils reached the nationally expected level and the percentage reaching the higher level almost doubled to well above last year's national average. Similar improvements have occurred in writing, where the school has moved quickly to successfully reduce the gap between girls' and boys' performance. However, boys' reading skills still lag behind those of girls. The progress of a few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English, is not as consistently good as other pupils' when additional adult support is not available.

In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress in the Nursery and exceptionally good progress in the current Reception classes, to overcome low starting points in some areas of their learning. By the end of Reception, nearly all children reach the goals set for them and a good number are now exceeding them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils' views are listened to and acted upon, so they have a clear sense of their role in supporting the school to get better. Recent initiatives to help pupils make improvements to their behaviour are working very well in helping them see the importance of thinking of others. Behaviour is good and often exemplary, especially as pupils move around the school. The 'Sorry Book', which encourages children to reflect on their behaviour, and the 'Golden Certificate' which recognises good behaviour and care for others, are welcomed by the pupils. Pupils are delighted that teachers, 'Look out for you doing good things. Then they write your name in the Golden Book with a gold pen.' All aspects of the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good; reflected in the pupils' appreciation of the world around them, their clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and their particularly good understanding of the diversity of the world in which they live. Pupils give generously of their time and energy to raise funds for a wide range of charities throughout the year. They are very proud of their involvement in the local community through their performances both in and out of school. Pupils have good levels of literacy and numeracy and show high levels of cooperation. These equip them well for the next stage of education and support their

future economic well-being. Close liaison with parents and a well planned curriculum ensure that the pupils adopt a healthy diet and take plenty of exercise. Attendance is average and the improvement this year demonstrates the school's success in discouraging parents from taking their children on holiday during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers generally plan well for the different groups in their classes. Tasks are well matched to needs of most pupils and this allows them to work independently and develop confidence through succeeding by their own efforts. Now and then a few pupils in each class, with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or whose first language is not English do not always make the same rate of progress because the tasks are sometimes too difficult or the pupils wait to be prompted by the teacher. While boys' enthusiasm for learning matches that of girls, teachers are aware that reading materials in the school do not excite the boys interest as well as they could. The school plans to redress this when the library is re-stocked in the new building next term. Warm and trusting relationships are a feature of all classes. Pupils hold their teachers in high regard and are keen to please them by working hard and completing the work set. Time is well used because teachers have established simple routines and have clear expectations of what children will do. In the current Reception, the children learn at a rapid pace through well designed play activities that excite and motivate them exceptionally well. At the end of sessions, they review their learning very well and convey a strong sense pride in their achievements.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that promotes good achievement. Pupils have many opportunities to develop special interests and enhance their learning through visits to museums and local historic sites. Visitors to the school extend their understanding of other faiths and their knowledge of different festivals. During inspection, Year 1 pupils were keen to learn about the festival of Sukkot, from a visitor from the Jewish faith, while Year 2 were out visiting a local museum to enrich their learning about life in Victorian times. Special talents are developed through the range of clubs that the school runs. Pupils in Year 4 were pleased to talk about their forthcoming performance at the region's famous concert hall and were clearly proud of the choir's record of entertaining the local community. The curriculum for the youngest children is very well planned to meet their needs through play and physical activity. Good account is taken of children's needs to develop good personal and social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All aspects of health and safety and risk assessment are secure and there are good procedures in place for child protection. Staff have been checked for their suitability for working with children and records are kept up to date. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language receive good general support from staff who know them well, but sometimes they are not always as well supported in class. The school's regular consultation with parents helps to maintain the very good partnership that supports pupils' learning. Parents are pleased that they have the opportunity to comment on the school's performance and what might be improved. Support and guidance for pupils' academic work ensures most make good progress and the pupils themselves are productively evaluating how well they are doing in lessons. As one pupil put it, 'There are lots of ways to get help if you need it'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The relatively new senior management team has been successful in identifying weaknesses and taking quick and effective action to raise standards even further. Although the tracking systems to monitor the pupils' progress are mainly very effective, there are a few pupils who occasionally do not do quite as well as their peers. Good monitoring and evaluation, undertaken by staff and governors, as well as the senior leadership team, gives the school an accurate picture of its effectiveness. Staff in the school with management responsibilities welcome the clear expectations and support to implement change that is given by the headteacher. They speak of feeling like, '...better professionals and better informed to understand the bigger picture'. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have complementary skills that serve the school well, for instance, in raising standards in mathematics and in information and communication technology.

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Governors make a considerable contribution to the school, based on a good knowledge of its work. The chair of governors leads the governing body well and has been proactive in pursuing new accommodation for the school. The single issue at the last inspection has been very well tackled so that provision in the Foundation Stage is now good. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in raising already high standards further and in securing the new accommodation that the school will take up in the spring term.

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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	3

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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	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?	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	2
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	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

Ponteland First School

North Road

Ponteland

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE20 9UH

29 September 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you all very much for the lovely warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. Your lovely behaviour and kindness to each other were a pleasure to see. So too was all the fun you had in the playground. Yours is a good school and all of you are helping it to get better. I very much enjoyed seeing you work so well together. You work very hard in lessons so I understand why your parents and teachers are so proud of your achievements. You also enjoy your learning very much and join in with great enthusiasm when you read rhyming poems or discuss ideas for writing.

You said you feel safe in school because teachers and your friends all look after each other and no one is left out. I agree with you, and well done to the school council for organising the friendship seat, that is a big help to anyone who is feeling a bit lonely. I know you Buddies do a good job in keeping an eye out for anyone who needs a friend and that all of you help your class and the school to run smoothly by volunteering to help with jobs. All these things add up to you being very special young people with a lot to offer others and you do.

To help your good school get even better I have asked the headteacher and staff to help everyone to achieve their best, especially in reading.

Thank you again, for looking after me so well. Please pass on my thanks to the cook for my lovely lunch. You were right Year 4 - the food is delicious and there is plenty. I felt as though I had eaten Christmas dinner!

My very best wishes for the future to all of you and I hope you enjoy your new school building.

Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead Inspector