



# Slaley First School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 122227  
**Local Authority** Northumberland  
**Inspection number** 292344  
**Inspection dates** 6–7 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Heather Evans

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	Slaley Village
<b>School category</b>	Community		Hexham, Northumberland
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9		NE47 0AA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01434 673220
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	51	<b>Fax number</b>	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Marge Rastall
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Demelza Ross
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2001		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
3–9	6–7 February 2007	292344

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

This is a very small first school in Northumberland. At present no pupils take free school meals. Some pupils live close to the school but many are brought by bus or taxi from outlying villages. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. A small number speak another language as well as English but they work well in English. Attainment on entry is broadly average but varies widely year-on-year depending on the nature of the small groups. All the pupils are taught in mixed age 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 with some outstanding features. The school is a very caring place where children are safe and secure. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding, which enables the school to maintain and extend the positive qualities found in the previous inspection. The headteacher is supported very well by all the teachers and support staff. They work together sharing their skills in a constructive way. The governing body is effective and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has good capacity for further improvement and provides good value for money.

Standards are above average and achievement is good. In the assessments in 2006, pupils in Year 2 attained standards above the national average in reading and writing. Writing standards are exceptionally high. Standards are above national averages in mathematics and average in science. In 2006, all the school's targets for pupils in Year 2 were met. Those agreed for 2007 are ambitious but indications are that pupils are on course to achieve them. By the end of Year 4 in 2006, standards were above the expected levels in English, mathematics and science. However, comparison with national averages should be made with caution as there are very small groups in each class.

Good provision in the Foundation Stage enables children to make a good start in learning through practical tasks and activities. Throughout the rest of the school, consistently good teaching and an enriched curriculum support pupils' good achievement. In English and mathematics, all work is monitored to ensure that it meets pupils' identified learning needs effectively. Teachers initiate rapid intervention whenever problems are identified. Assessment in other subjects is well organised and detailed but is not as precise as in the core subjects. There are strengths in the good curriculum in French, Spanish, art and physical education. Very strong partnerships with parents, the community and other local schools enrich pupils' learning.

Pupils' personal development is excellent, as is the provision for their care, support and guidance. This is because work is tailored very effectively to meet their individual needs. The quality of support is good for talented and gifted pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or those who are learning English as an additional language. Children's behaviour and attitudes are good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils know how to live safely and healthily. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school's communal life, and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the monitoring and assessment procedures in all subjects to more closely match the very successful systems used in English and mathematics.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well across the school. They make good progress because teachers provide work that is matched accurately to what they know and understand. From the average starting point, children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and, by the end of reception, the majority reach at least the level found in most schools. Teacher assessment in Year 2 shows standards are significantly above the national average overall. They are significantly above average in reading and very high in writing. They are above average in mathematics and average in science. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4. Throughout the school, skills in mental mathematics and pupils' ability to explain their calculations are being used to very good effect in mathematics, science and design and technology. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because work is matched to their needs and support assistants give effective help. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls by the end of Years 2 and 4.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development is outstanding, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. The good personal, social and emotional development of children in the Nursery and the Reception class ensures that they settle quickly into main school routines. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They value the many thoughtfully arranged activities on offer and engage in them enthusiastically. Pupils are sensible, confident and eager to learn. They say that school is a safe place where bullying is not a problem. Excellent relationships promote mutual trust that reflects the school's positive ethos. The school council gives members good experience of accepting responsibility and decision-making within the school and the wider community. Pupils instinctively look after one another, as when acting as buddies to younger children at playtime. They have a shared understanding about how to keep safe and lead healthy lives. Pupils are proud of their links with a school in Tanzania and with other schools across the county. They are committed to taking care of the environment and appreciate how much the local community values them and their school. They are well prepared for the next phase of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good, confirming the school's regular monitoring and review of the quality of teaching in lessons. Skilled, enthusiastic teaching in all classes makes

a strong contribution to the standard of pupils' work and helps them to make good progress. The school's emphasis on imaginative writing and high quality presentation promotes high standards. Thorough planning, clear organisation and effective use of modern technology are all strong features of lessons in English, mathematics and science. Teachers' expectations are high and shared by pupils who expect to work hard and succeed. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are used very effectively to extend independent learning in other subjects. The school has initiated a programme of practical work in mathematics and science that is enthusing pupils and increasing their confidence. When teachers plan lessons they consider individual needs and plan work to enable each one to attain their best. Very helpful marking and discussion of pupils' work shows them clearly how well they are doing and how they might improve. Teachers recognise that the assessment systems in other curricular subjects are not as effective as those in the Foundation Stage, English and mathematics.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. Good emphasis is placed on developing pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy. Children in the Foundation Stage are given a good start to their education through an interesting curriculum. Links between subjects and ideas use the diverse skills of the teaching and support staff very well. Pupils enjoy the skills brought to the school by visiting specialists including sculptors, artists, professional sportsmen and musicians. A rich range of extra-curricular activities particularly in sport, music and the arts enriches pupils' experiences very well. Opportunities for pupils of all ages to learn French and Spanish add greatly to their understanding of the world. Work to celebrate the traditions of other countries through linked studies between English, history and geography increases their cultural awareness. Everyone is included in all activities and has equal access to the curriculum. As a result, pupils learn well. Strong links with outside agencies enable staff to offer the most effective help to pupils.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

This aspect of the school's work is outstanding. All adults know the pupils extremely well. Parents appreciate the sense of family community and genuine care. Pupils show a great sense of kindness and respect for one another. Child protection and health and safety procedures are in place and pupils say that they feel safe and secure. They all say that they know of at least one adult that they could turn to for help. Teachers use the information they collect about what pupils have achieved extremely well to identify those in need of extra help. They create ways of providing additional challenges for each pupil to achieve well. Very helpful marking of pupils' work and setting of individual learning targets, including in their personal development, is making a particularly strong contribution to guiding pupils' improvement. This fosters very positive attitudes to learning. The school works very effectively with families and

external support agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils receive the help they need to achieve well. Well trained, skilled and very committed support staff make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good with some outstanding features. The vision and drive of the headteacher are outstanding. With her staff, she is highly committed to the school as the heart of the community. Her understanding of how the school can develop further is shared by all involved in the life of the school. Teachers and governors have identified areas for development and are resolved to bring about the improvements listed in the school's strategic development plan as soon as possible. As a direct result of the headteacher's dedication and leadership, high expectations have been maintained throughout the school.

Curriculum leadership is shared effectively amongst the teachers. Whilst working to maintain the high standards, in regular assessments and in tested subjects they are aiming to develop the whole child through sporting, creative and reflective activities. Finances are well managed. Governors are aware of their responsibility to hold the school to account. They monitor initiatives carefully and rejoice in what the headteacher and the staff have achieved over time. With their help and support, the school is well placed to enable pupils to move on to the next phase of life in education.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

Slaley First School

Slaley Village

Hexham

Northumberland

NE47 0AA

6 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for all your help when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking with you so much. It was good to see how you and your teachers work together and get along so well.

Slaley is a good school. You know that already because you told me about the good things on offer whenever you had a chance. Your school is getting better because everyone of you is doing your best to find ways of making sure that it does. You told me that you needed to learn so that you could get the job that you wanted when you were grown up. You explained that your teachers would help you to do the very best that you could. You also told me how you valued the jobs you undertook to make the school run smoothly. I enjoyed watching you record how far you were on your journey to success. This shows an independence that is not always obvious in pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4. You take responsibility for planning so much of your own work very seriously and do not just copy your friends or wait for your teachers to think for you. Your teachers are planning ways to check what you can do in other subjects as well as they do in reading, writing and mathematics.

The way you come to school very regularly, always with a smile, shows that you enjoy your work and value what you are doing. I discovered that you behave well on the long bus journeys when older children help to take care of the younger ones. Well done! Watching you share your ideas and feelings with such sensitive and evocative language before creating exciting stories made me proud to have met you. You know that this careful discussion helps you to do better in all your work. When you practise reading, learn your multiplication tables or spellings, you understand clearly that you need these skills to do well.

You feel proud of your school with very good reason. Please accept my best wishes for an even more successful future.

Yours sincerely

Heather Evans

Lead Inspector