



Blyth Morpeth Road First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122257
Local Authority Northumberland
Inspection number 292353
Inspection dates 31 January –1 February 2007
Reporting inspector Gianna Ulyatt

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

Type of school	First	School address	Disraeli Street
School category	Community		Blyth, Northumberland
Age range of pupils	3–9		NE24 1HZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01670 353257
Number on roll (school)	229	Fax number	01670 797749
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Joyce Foggett
		Headteacher	Mr Michael Bell
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size school is situated in an urban area of high deprivation. The school's population is from predominantly White British backgrounds. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very low. The percentage of pupils who are entitled to a free school meal is almost three times the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is more than double the national average. The headteacher has been in post for three years and since his appointment there have been significant staff changes. Blyth Morpeth Road is part of a local network of schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with good features. The strong leadership of the headteacher has given the school a clear direction and has been instrumental in bringing about significant improvements. The school has given great attention to improving the partnership with parents and this has become an area of strength. Parents are rightly pleased with the care and education the school offers their children. They write many positive comments including, '...the school is a very warm and friendly welcoming school. From the moment you enter the premises, the atmosphere is second to none'. Pupils enjoy coming to school because they say they feel safe and secure. They say, 'Teachers don't ignore you and they always help you when you need it.' Since the breakfast club started, punctuality has improved. The introduction of many after school clubs has improved pupils' enjoyment of school life.

The pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and it is good in mathematics. In 2006, standards at the end of Year 2 were well below average in reading and writing and broadly average in mathematics. In mathematics, progress is good and in reading and writing it is satisfactory. In Years 3 and 4 pupils make satisfactory progress in reading and writing and good progress in mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make the same progress as other pupils, but they do particularly well in mathematics where they reach standards similar to other pupils. The school has worked hard for the last few years to improve provision in the Foundation Stage. When children enter the Nursery their attainment is well below expectations. They make good progress in both Nursery and Reception and are well prepared for Year 1.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. It is good in the Foundation Stage because assessment is used well to plan challenging learning for all the children. However, assessment is not used as effectively elsewhere in school and although marking is done regularly, it does not always give pupils guidance on how to improve. The good curriculum ensures that pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthily and safely. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities broadens their horizons and involves them in the community. The curriculum for Foundation Stage children is good and ensures that all have regular access to a stimulating range of practical learning opportunities. All pupils are well cared for, starting in the Foundation Stage where good links with the nearby child care centre and home visits make the transition from home to Nursery a positive experience for children.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The headteacher provides strong leadership and has developed the role of senior managers and staff in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning to bring about improvement. The analysis of data is developing but it is not yet sufficiently used by key staff to focus on how well pupils are learning. Governors, many of whom are newly appointed, are beginning to check more closely the school's performance, with the right balance of support and challenge. Priorities for further improvement and the action that needs to be taken clearly demonstrate that the school knows what has to be done to achieve its aims. It has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop the use of data by all key staff, particularly to raise standards in reading and writing.
- Ensure that teachers use assessment information to plan work that challenges all groups of pupils in all subjects.
- Provide pupils with better guidance on how they might improve their work through more effective marking.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and it is good in mathematics.

From a well below average starting point, children make good progress and reach the levels expected for their age by the end of Reception. This good level of progress is recent in the school and is due to major improvements to the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage during the last two years. Children are now well prepared for further learning in Year 1.

In Key Stage 1, the pupils make satisfactory progress overall, although it is better in mathematics where achievement is good. Standards, by the end of Year 2 in 2006 were well below average in reading and writing but broadly average in mathematics. This is partly a reflection of the high number of pupils with learning difficulties in reading and writing.

In Years 3 and 4 the pupils' progress is also satisfactory in reading and writing but good in mathematics. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that standards at the end of Year 4 are well below average in reading and writing but broadly average in mathematics. Girls outperform boys in writing, although the percentage of boys with learning difficulties in reading and writing is much higher. Overall progress for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is similar to other pupils, but it is particularly good in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and behaviour are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Bullying is rare and parents and pupils are confident in the way the school manages behaviour. Pupils enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their satisfactory attendance and much improved punctuality. They are well aware of how to stay safe and know there is always an adult there to turn to when needed. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They talk about a balanced diet and the need for plenty of exercise. This is confirmed by the number of pupils who attend after school sports clubs, and the gardening club where they grow vegetables. Pupils also enjoy the daily 'wake and shake' morning exercise sessions. Most pupils have good attitudes to work. Information and communication

technology (ICT) skills and the ability to work with others are developing well and provide a sound basis for pupils' future well-being. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider communities. Examples of this include, the way the school supports charities, how play monitors look after younger pupils and the way buddies are always there to help out. Pupils are particularly proud to serve on the school council, running the meetings themselves in a businesslike way. They have helped to improve provision by costing and buying additional playground equipment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with strengths in the Foundation Stage where assessment is used effectively to plan challenging learning experiences for all the children. Adults know the children well and work with them in small groups to encourage concentration and increase the pace of their learning. In Years 1 to 4, teaching is satisfactory; although there are examples of good practice developing. Teachers explain clearly to pupils what they are going to learn and what is expected of them by the end of the lesson. This makes expectations clear to the pupils and helps them to focus their attention on the tasks in hand. Relationships are good so pupils are well behaved and try hard to please their teacher, even though at times their concentration wanes because they sit too long on the carpet before going to activities. All teachers use interactive whiteboards well to motivate pupils and enhance learning. The quality of planning is improving, but in practice, expectations are not high enough, particularly in English, or the match of work to the pupils' needs does not provide the right amount of challenge. However, the match of work in mathematics is much better and as a result, the pupils are challenged and they make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum is underpinned by an effective emphasis on personal and social education which, from the day they start school, provides all pupils with the skills and attributes necessary to become satisfactory learners. Basic skills, including ICT are consolidated and used to support learning in other subjects but pupils do better in mathematics because the curriculum is more practically based. To help pupils improve in English, the school is beginning to implement strategies to extend the pupils' vocabulary and starting to link subjects more closely to provide more purposeful writing activities. The curriculum is enriched well and contributes strongly to pupils' enjoyment, partly through additional funding for clubs such as the cookery club, which is for parents and pupils. Day visits, the residential experience for older pupils, visitors and after-school clubs are much appreciated by pupils. The range of sporting activities, some in conjunction with the local Sports Partnership, add considerably to the quality of learning experiences, as highlighted in basketball skills lessons offered to pupils

throughout the school. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is good because of coherent planning for indoor and outdoor activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for care, guidance and support is good. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities or those who are vulnerable are well supported. Pupils who may be gifted or talented are identified and also supported well, for example by attending a stimulating mathematics day. There are good procedures for checking the progress of individual pupils against challenging targets, but subsequent actions to help pupils make better progress have not had time to be fully effective. Pupils are not sufficiently confident in evaluating their own progress against their targets in English and mathematics because teachers' marking is inconsistent across the school. It does not assess pupils work clearly enough and comments do not help pupils to know how they might improve their work. Procedures and practices for child protection and all aspects of health and safety are robust. Parents and pupils agree that the school is a safe and secure place. Arrangements for children starting school are good because of the good links with the child care centre, the mothers' and toddlers' group and those forged with parents. As a result, children settle quickly into school routines.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's own higher judgement for leadership and management is more a reflection of the considerable progress it has made through a period of significant change, rather than a judgement about its current effectiveness. However, the headteacher is providing strong leadership and staff are becoming more skilled at influencing improvement throughout the school. They are beginning to monitor teaching and learning with increasing precision, but the analysis of data by some key staff is not sufficiently focused on tracking how well pupils are learning to be able to identify key priorities for themselves. The headteacher has shared a clear vision for the school's future development and is supported by staff and governors. Together as a team their knowledge of the school is increasing and their professional development is aligned to the initiatives to raise standards. The school aims to be fully inclusive and the needs of all learners are central to its vision. Resources are used well and the school provides satisfactory value for money. The success of recent developments demonstrates clearly that the capacity to improve is good.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	2
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	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Blyth Morpeth Road First School

Disraeli Street

Blyth

Northumberland

NE24 1HZ

31 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for making us very welcome during our visit to your school. It was a pleasure to sit and chat with you at lunchtime and talk about the meals you enjoy and the subjects you like best. I would like to thank you all for being so helpful, polite and friendly. You showed us how to get to different parts of the school and you opened doors for us. It was a pleasure listening to children in the Reception class talking about the visit to the fire station.

We like the way your teachers and all the other adults care for you and give you the chance to learn new things, both in lessons and in the many activities you do after school.

As you know, we saw some of your lessons. We like the way most of you behave in class and listen to your teachers. You clearly like the interactive white boards to help you learn because you really concentrated when they were used. You like the way teachers are always on hand to help you when you get stuck and you are going to receive even more help to show you how to improve. Teachers know you all very well and they will be asking all of you to work even harder, especially in reading and writing, so you make faster progress. You in turn must try your best to make sure your work gets better and better.

Keep up the good work!

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector