



Ovingham Church of England First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122278
Local Authority Northumberland
Inspection number 292356
Inspection dates 1–2 March 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	Ovingham
School category	Voluntary controlled		Prudhoe, Northumberland
Age range of pupils	4–9		NE42 6DE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01661 832581
Number on roll (school)	138	Fax number	01661 835413
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Simon Harper
		Headteacher	Mrs Julie Shields
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2002		

Age group 4–9	Inspection dates 1–2 March 2007	Inspection number 292356
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small school serving a village and its environs where socio-economic conditions are comparatively advantageous. Almost all pupils are from White British families and mobility within the pupil population is below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is very low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ovingham First School is a good school. It is a school where pupils prosper in their personal development. They are mature for their age and become very considerate, courteous, and upright. Their social skills are highly developed so friendliness and mutual support are second nature and behaviour is essentially good. Pupils play a full part in the school and local community. They are also very clued-up about healthy living, and try to eat wisely and participate in a wide range of exercise. All in all, they are well prepared for their life ahead.

Pupils achieve well and standards are above average. They have good abilities when they enter the Reception class and make good progress to exceed the goals expected of them by the time they enter Year 1. They continue to sustain above average standards by Year 2, usually in all subjects although writing slipped to average in 2006. A phase of unsettled staffing has meant that overall standards by the end of Year 4 in recent years have not been as good as those in Key Stage 1. The school is addressing this matter successfully and pupils are already making good progress towards improving standards in all subjects. For example, the quality of reading has improved dramatically and most other subjects are average, but improving.

A good curriculum and effective teaching meet many of pupils' needs, because the level of challenge in work is usually high and there is a strong emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills. Pupils have a zest for learning, but teaching is sometimes quite formal and some lessons lack the pzazz and opportunities for pupils to be fully motivated and stretched. On these occasions, restlessness tends to slow the pace of learning. Teaching assistants are good at supporting pupils in group work but are not always deployed effectively in whole class activities.

Pupils feel safe in school and value the good care they receive from all adults. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are secure and the efficient systems for checking pupils' progress enable staff to set challenging but achievable learning targets in English and mathematics. Pupils appreciate these and the helpfulness of teachers' guidance through marking.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The compassionate yet firm leadership of the headteacher ensures a warm, positive and Christian ethos, and a clear focus on learning. She is well supported by the acting deputy headteachers and governing body. Although the school's plans for development are good, they are not very detailed and focus too much on the core subjects. Nevertheless, the school has made good progress since the last inspection in maintaining pupils' achievement and addressing key issues. Therefore, it has good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing.
- Ensure all teachers are more flexible in their approach so that pupils are constantly motivated and learn at a brisk pace.

- Ensure that plans for improvement are more detailed and more creative.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school, including those who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Standards are above average. Children tend to have above average skills and knowledge when they enter the Reception class. They make good progress and, by the end of the year, they exceed the goals expected of five year olds in all areas of learning, especially in personal and social development.

Standards by Year 2 are above average, with only slight fluctuations from year to year. Standards in reading and mathematics are usually higher than writing and were again in 2006. In 2006, standards in writing fell and were average. Girls attained better than boys in all subjects, but this is not typical; there is little difference normally

Recently, pupils' attainment by Year 4 has been average. It has not been as high as in Key Stage 1, mainly because of an unsettled staffing situation, which has now eased. Attainment in reading in 2006 was above average, mathematics was average but writing was below average. Understandably, writing is an area for development. The school's records and inspection evidence show an improving picture in the current Year 4 with pupils making good progress in all subjects, including information and communication technology (ICT). Standards are rising.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. During their time at school, they mature into very well-rounded, naturally courteous and extremely considerate individuals. They have highly developed social skills; they converse articulately and thoughtfully. Behaviour is good. Most pupils attend very regularly and overall annual attendance is at least average.

Pupils clearly love their school and are positive about their work. Most are very self-reliant in lessons and do not need supervision to maintain a swift pace of work when motivated. There are many eager takers for the various activities, as seen in the polite scrum at the chess club door. Pupils are very well versed in how to live healthily through diet and exercise; many are involved in sports outside the school. Even children in Reception know that surgeons' masks help to stop germs spreading to patients.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. For example, the sense of spirituality is readily seen in pupils' acute self-awareness. Pupils benefit from many cultural opportunities and the school is keen to expand their knowledge of multi-cultural issues further. Although there is no school council, pupils are very well consulted about school matters through questionnaires and class discussions. Overall, pupils are well prepared for their life ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good in all phases of the school. In recent years, staff absences have disrupted the flow of pupils' learning in Key Stage 2, but the situation is now improving. Teachers engage with their pupils well so that pupils are keen to work hard. Teachers' planning is good and the level of challenge for pupils is usually high enough, although not all work is fine-tuned to the needs of all pupils.

Learning is well explained, often with the help of interactive whiteboards, so pupils have a clear understanding of new concepts. Pupils appreciate the help they receive from teachers' marking and say it helps improve their learning. Teaching assistants work well with individual pupils and groups, but are not always fully involved in helping pupils learn throughout lessons.

Sometimes, lessons are a little mundane and reliant on set schemes. Not all teachers present new learning so that pupils can develop more independence of thought and creativity. Problem-solving in mathematics, for example, is not as good as it could be. Occasionally, teachers allow the pace of lessons to dwindle and this dilutes the quality of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum has a clear focus on literacy and numeracy, but not to the exclusion of other subjects. Opportunities for music are good; for example, with the result that pupils sing well. The school has introduced good systems to strengthen shortcomings identified in writing and teachers increasingly blend subjects to maximise opportunities for writing. Pupils have ample access to computers. The many extra activities, together with excellent partnerships with external agencies, broaden pupils' horizons.

Provision in the Reception year is good. It is well structured, albeit somewhat formal at times, but the independent activities provide good opportunities to learn through investigation, less apparent elsewhere in the school. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities enables them to be wholly included in lessons, and there is pragmatic and valuable support for the most able and/or talented pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils' well-being. Systems to safeguard pupils are in place, with all adults thoroughly vetted and very good first-aid procedures. The professional expertise of a governor assures the quality of annual risk assessments. The staff's pastoral care for pupils is strong. Pupils appreciate the sense of security and the approachability of staff. Excellent links with the adjacent middle school significantly ease pupils' move there.

The school has good systems to check pupils' progress and carries out effective analyses, which pinpoint underachievement and help teachers to provide clear learning targets for pupils. Such guidance is often referred to in lessons and in marking, so pupils' learning directly benefits.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides energetic and decisive leadership. Parents appreciate the ethos she has created. She is especially good at encouraging staff to develop through professional training. A former teaching assistant, for example, is now a successful teacher in the Reception class. The headteacher is well supported by two acting deputy headteachers, who share the leadership especially in key subjects.

Through regular monitoring and analyses of data, the school knows itself well. It knows its strengths and understands what it needs to do to improve further.

However, areas for development are not always as transparent as they might be as, for example, in feedback about teaching. The school's action plans are sensible but too focused on the main subjects without enough regard for other areas.

Governance is good. Governors' good contact with the school gives them a thorough knowledge of its progress. Their individual skills are valuable to the school, not least in the handling of its finances, which are shrewdly deployed. Communication and links with parents are good. Parental questionnaires were very positive although a minority of parents is not convinced that the school sufficiently values their views and those of their children. The partnership with the community is especially strong through the Church, nearby schools and local activities like the Goose Fair.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. It has addressed the key issues well, sustained levels of achievement and improved pupils' personal development. This, with the combined skills of the staff, shows that the school has good capacity to improve further.

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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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	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

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	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

Ovingham Church of England First School

Ovingham

Prudhoe

Northumberland

NE42 6DE

2 March 2007

Dear Pupils,

I thoroughly enjoyed my recent visit to your school. I particularly enjoyed meeting you and talking to you about your school. I learned a great deal from you and your comments were very helpful in helping me to get to know your school.

Like you, I think that yours is a good school. You achieve well in your work because you are well taught and because you work really hard in lessons. Most of you work quickly and usually do not even need an adult to check on you all the time. I understand why you appreciate the advice given to you by teachers and teaching assistants to help you improve your work. You benefit from many exciting experiences and succeed in many things, like your singing I heard in assembly. You have a good headteacher who makes sure things are going well.

You develop into fine individuals. You are very polite, caring and friendly, and you help to make the school a warm and welcoming place. You clearly are very happy at school. You feel secure because the school takes good care of you, but you also make the school safe because you are sensible towards one another. You behave well most of the time.

I think you know that you need to improve your writing. The school is already working on this and your continued efforts will be a great help. I have asked the school to provide you with even more interesting activities in lessons so that you all work at a brisk rate in lessons, and I am sure that you will respond equally well to this.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Scott

School inspector