

Norham St Ceolwulfs C of E Controlled First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135064
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	294260
Inspection date	1 May 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 category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Martin Gilham
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Grainger
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	West Street Norham-on-Tweed Berwick-on-Tweed Northumberland TD15 2JZ
Telephone number	01289 382370
Fax number	01289 382370

Age group	3–9
Inspection date	1 May 2007
Inspection number	294260

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small rural school serves a village and surrounding area adjacent to the border with Scotland. There is a proud local Border heritage. Socio-economic conditions are broadly average and all pupils come from White British families. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The movement within the pupil population is typical of most schools. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is average, but is variable and can sometimes be slightly higher. The school changed status and became a controlled Church of England school in 2005. It became federated with Cornhill First School in 2006. Its headteacher is the headteacher of both schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Norham St Ceolwulf's is a good school. It is currently experiencing an exciting phase of development, with its recent change of status, its federation with Cornhill First School and a new headteacher. Thus far, these are all benefiting the school and enabling it to strengthen its provision. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is sensibly expanding the scope of the school; for example, through better accommodation and staff training. The positive impact of the headteacher, the attitudes and capabilities of staff, together with an effective governing body clearly show a school with good capacity to improve further. Although costs per pupil are inevitably high in such a small school, it nevertheless provides good value for money.

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well. They make good progress through the school, including the Foundation Stage where nearly all children reach their expected goals. Standards fluctuate understandably in Years 2 and 4, in view of the different abilities and small size of each year group. This year, for example, there are only two pupils in Year 4. One particular attribute is the pupils' self-reliance in learning, which enables them to think through issues for themselves and sustain concentration. The school is very aware of how well individual pupils progress and responds well to fluctuations over time or to particular need.

Teaching is good in all classes. Teachers provide a positive working environment in which pupils are motivated to work. The strengths of teachers include the clarity of their expectations, their questioning skills and their empathetic praise and encouragement. Learning is usually well matched to pupils' needs although teachers do not systematically provide challenging enough work, especially for more able pupils, because their planning is not sufficiently detailed. There is a good curriculum, often enlivened by visits or special activities, that ensures pupils acquire good basic skills in literacy and numeracy as well as effective social skills.

Pupils' personal development is good and pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education. The school is like an extended family in which pupils look out for one another, and work and play together readily. They behave well and are respectful in lessons. They know when it is time to work and time to play, and they enjoy both in equal measures. This is implicit from their consistently good attendance. They are increasingly adopting a healthy lifestyle, and all pupils are taught to swim. Their sense of community is excellent. They are fully involved in village activities and school life, and fundraise for an overseas charity.

A key priority for the school is to involve all teachers in its management, in order to share the workload, and to maximise and develop staff expertise. This is not yet fully under way, but there already exists a common will to do so. Parents have nothing but praise for the school. One appreciated the new federation which 'appears to have gone more smoothly than many of us anticipated and has led to an enhanced learning environment.' Such praise is justified and augurs very well for the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teachers' planning to ensure that work is consistently more challenging for pupils, especially more able pupils.
- Ensure that all staff are fully involved in the monitoring, evaluating and development of their areas of responsibility.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and all pupils achieve well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress because they develop effective independent learning skills. Progress is especially good in physical and creative development, and their knowledge and understanding of the world. By the end of the Reception year, children mostly reach the goals expected nationally of five year olds, and a few exceed them.

Statistics concerning very small year groups should be treated with caution but the school's data shows some consistency. Standards in Key Stage 1 were average in 2005 and improved slightly in 2006 to be above average, aided by a sharp upturn in writing standards. The school's predictions for pupils in the current Year 2 suggest that these standards will be maintained.

The optional tests in 2006 showed that pupils in Year 4 had also made good progress from Year 2. Reading and writing were above average. Although attainment in mathematics dipped to average, overall performance had improved since 2005 and, according to the school's data, is likely to be sustained in 2007. Throughout the school, more able pupils achieve well although there is scope for some of them to do better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Consistently good attendance is testimony to the fact that pupils like school. They enjoy learning new things and respect their teachers, so they are responsive in lessons, concentrate hard and work productively with other pupils. They are sensible and safety-conscious around school, although sometimes boisterous in the playground. Behaviour is very good in lessons. Overall, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The spiritual dimension is softly intrinsic to school life; pupils are currently designing crosses for the school building. The school is addressing the need to develop pupils' awareness of multicultural issues.

Pupils' contribution to the community is outstanding. They are frequently involved in village activities such as, ceilidhs, distributing harvest bags and the Scarecrow Festival, and have raised funds for polio victims in Tanzania for over twenty years. The school is a focal point in the village and is held in high regard locally. Pupils also contribute very well to the school's development through the pupil council and activities, such as devising a school tartan. Pupils know how to lead a healthy lifestyle, although they are not wholly clear about what is a suitable diet. Good academic and social skills mean that they are prepared well for life ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. In each classroom, there is a warm, positive atmosphere, in which pupils acquire a good work ethic. Teachers present and explain new learning adeptly, often with the added bonus of interactive whiteboards and other resources like historical costumes, so that pupils are clear about what they need to learn and how to learn it. Teachers

are skilful at asking questions, especially of older pupils, to assess the extent of pupils' learning and to encourage them to think for themselves.

Mostly, there is a good level of challenge that keeps pupils motivated and maintains a good pace to learning. Pupils say that expectations vary, and certainly teachers do not always differentiate work so that some of the most able are fully stretched. Their lesson planning meets the needs of the different year groups, but not necessarily the different ability levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from the sensitive support of teaching assistants. All staff are skilled at praising pupils subtly and very effectively for genuine achievement, so pupils feel quietly buoyed by their own success. However, teachers do not consistently show pupils how to improve their work through clear and helpful marking of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum with a healthy focus on literacy and numeracy. These subjects are often further promoted across the curriculum. The curriculum framework follows good guidelines and so ensures that pupils learn progressively, despite the potential difficulties of mixed year groups. There is some good enrichment through community activities, local visits and some lessons. Nursery children, for example, learned by examining ladybirds under a magnifying glass that the insects are not just black and red. Such stimulation is not always apparent in the everyday curriculum.

Individual learning plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have clear and achievable targets, although not enough details about timescales and reviews. Personal, health and social education is effective and ensures that pupils are responsible citizens. The strong emphasis in the Foundation Stage on independent learning skills is continued throughout the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. The pastoral care for pupils' well-being is particularly effective because teachers know pupils very well individually and so respond readily to their personal needs. Pupils appreciate this and feel secure. The formal systems for safeguarding pupils are in place; these include the vetting of adults connected with the school and risk assessments for school journeys. Staff are well trained in first aid.

The school has a simple but very effective way of recording and analysing pupils' progress. This enables the school to know whether all pupils are performing as expected and so provide extra help if required. Pupils' individual learning targets are essentially good, and usually specific, although some are too broad. Pupils particularly appreciate the helpful advice they receive from teachers in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The enthusiastic and thoughtful leadership by the headteacher has enabled the federation with Cornhill First school to proceed

smoothly and successfully. Her clear, practical vision for the school is shared by staff and governors, and she has been successful in streamlining the school's plans for extending and refurbishing the school building. Self-evaluation is largely accurate because the headteacher monitors and analyses the school's work shrewdly, especially in assessing the quality of teaching and learning. Other staff have responsibilities for a few subjects but their roles are underdeveloped.

Governance is good. Governors are supportive, knowledgeable and wise. They are fully involved in the development of the school, and talk of lively debates at governors' meetings. However, they do not always keep a sharp enough eye on standards and the quality of the accommodation. Parents think very highly of the school. In their questionnaires, they were unanimous in their praise for all aspects of the school.

It is too early to judge the full impact of the federated status of the school but the signs are very promising and, at this stage, there are no obvious disadvantages. A joint recruitment exercise has already proved beneficial and good opportunities have been initiated to maximise staff skills, and not just those of the headteacher, across both schools.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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	NA

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	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.

Annex A

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

2 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Norham St Ceolwulf's CofE Controlled First School, Northumberland, TD15 2JZ

I am writing to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. You quickly helped me to get to know your school, and I enjoyed meeting you all.

Like you, I think that yours is a good school. You have good teachers who encourage you to work hard, provide you with good lessons, advise you well and praise your efforts. As a result, you all achieve well and standards are good. You behave well, especially in lessons, and I was pleased by your levels of concentration and cooperation with one another. You understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle, although you are not all entirely sure what a balanced diet is.

I was particularly impressed by your contribution to the village and wider world. I know you are fully involved in many local activities, yet you do not neglect those less fortunate than yourselves in distant places, like Africa. I also liked your involvement in the design of the school tartan and the new crosses for the school. You attend school regularly – proof that you enjoy it and want to come every day. Although you are well prepared for your future education, I have asked the school to make sure that all lessons are challenging and exciting enough. I hope you will continue to work hard to help the teachers improve your standards further.

It is an exciting time at your school with a new headteacher and the link with Cornhill First School. Your headteacher is certainly ensuring that the school continues to thrive and is already helping the governors to plan a better building for you. There are other advantages to be gained from the link between the two schools, especially when all the teachers are more directly involved.

I wish you every success for the future.

Best wishes

Andrew Scott

School inspector