



Harrowgate Hill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 135088
Local Authority Darlington
Inspection number 294268
Inspection dates 1–2 March 2007
Reporting inspector Moira Fitzpatrick

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Thompson Street West
School category	Community		Darlington, County Durham
Age range of pupils	3–11		DL3 0HZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01325 253300
Number on roll (school)	597	Fax number	01325 253599
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Calvert Hardy
		Headteacher	Mr John Warburton
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	1–2 March 2007	294268

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very large newly-built school, formed by the amalgamation of an infant and junior school, with a number of pupils joining from a small primary school, which closed recently. The school has established Nursery provision in the Foundation Stage since opening in 2005. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and fewer still at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average and a below average proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational need. When children start in the Nursery, their attainment is broadly typical of three-year-olds.

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, which is developing areas of excellence, and gives good value for money. Since it was opened under two years ago, the school has moved rapidly to establish a good ethos and high standards for pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school; for example, they praise the care and quality of learning it provides for their children and for the part that parents are allowed to play in the school's development. Inspectors agree with parents that pastoral care is outstanding.

Pupils achieve well, and reach above average standards. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. In Years 1 to 6, pupils make good progress because teaching is good. Occasionally, some lower attaining pupils make slower progress in writing because they are not given enough time to develop their vocabulary through speaking and listening sessions. Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' needs and are keen for them to do well. The school is aware that teaching time in the juniors needs to be increased to be in line with the national average. This will help to give pupils more time to improve their basic skills at an even faster rate. The well planned curriculum, which interests and motivates pupils, ensures that they enjoy their learning and have a good understanding of how to live healthy lives, show concern for others and make sensible choices to stay safe. Good basic skills combined with their good personal qualities means pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education.

Their personal development is good. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community because they are given many opportunities for this. For example, their work to improve the environment is very good. Also, pupils are justly proud of their support for children in a school in Malawi. Pupils' behaviour is excellent; it supports good learning in lessons and happy and harmonious play during breaks. Pupils' very positive and mature attitudes play a major part in creating the calm and welcoming atmosphere that pervades the school.

Leadership and management are good. Excellent management by the headteacher, supported by the two deputy headteachers, has established the new school securely and set it on a clear course of development to raise standards and achievement. Middle managers and governors play an important part in developing the school and are aware, through careful evaluation, of where further improvements are needed. Given the school's rate of development and its good self-evaluation procedures, it is very well placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the provision for pupils in the lowest sets in Key Stage 2 English lessons to ensure that they consistently make the same good progress as other groups.
- Increase the time available for teaching in Key Stage 2 so that it meets national recommendations.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average; the majority of pupils make the same good progress over time and there are no differences in the progress of boys and girls.

Children join the Foundation Stage with attainment that is broadly average and by the end of Reception almost all children have reached the goals set for their learning. In the national assessments in 2006, Year 2 pupils reached average standards in writing and mathematics, and exceeded them in reading. Pupils in Year 2 are making good progress towards their targets and school data, supported by inspection evidence, indicate that they are on course to exceed the national average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the year.

Standards in Year 6 are above average in mathematics, science and English, and the school is on course to exceed its targets for the higher level in writing. In 2006 national tests for Year 6 pupils, the school exceeded its targets at the expected level in mathematics and broadly met its target in English. The school reached its targets at the higher level in both subjects. In Key Stage 2, lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other groups, except in writing, where class organisation restricts the full development of their literacy skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. It is demonstrated by pupils' excellent behaviour, their calm composure around the school, their independent learning skills, courtesy to visitors and willingness to help others. Pupils who have gained Digital Excellence Awards teach their fellow pupils information and communication technology skills. SPOT pupils (special pupils on trust) work at break times on projects for school competitions. Pupils have a growing understanding of their own and other cultures and religions. This helps them become sensitive to the feelings and beliefs of others. Supporting two children in Malawi has brought home to pupils a deep understanding of life in developing countries.

Pupils enjoy school and this reflected in the good attendance of the vast majority of pupils. The overall attendance rate is slightly reduced by a few pupils taking holidays during term time. Pupils are enthusiastic about projects such as testing for acid rain and the wide range of eco projects in the school. Pupils have taken a high profile role in community projects, such as initiating traffic calming measures in the vicinity of the school. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles and understand the importance of eating fruit, drinking water and taking plenty of exercise. The school council has worked with the school lunch providers to improve school meals, and has voiced the concerns of

older pupils at the lateness of their lunchtime. By Year 6, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and account for the good progress most pupils make. However, current setting arrangements for English in the juniors do not provide enough opportunities for lower attaining pupils to develop the full range of literacy skills through discussion work. This is because pupils are too passive, listen for too long and do not make the best progress they can because they do not have enough time to practise new skills.

Typically, relationships are good, giving pupils the confidence to take part in class discussion and develop their ideas in most lessons. Good teamwork between teachers and assistants ensures pupils of all abilities maintain good levels of concentration. Teachers make good use of technical resources to interest and motivate pupils. As a result, pupils' understanding is secure and they work hard and with enthusiasm. Where teaching is particularly good, teachers challenge pupils' thinking skills through in-depth questioning.

The new marking procedures used by teachers have a positive impact on pupils' learning and their eagerness to do well. Pupils know what to do to improve and the progress shown in books this year demonstrates how well the new systems work. In the Foundation Stage, adults work with small groups of children. This helps them keep well focused on their activities and accelerates their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and offers a wide range of learning experiences. Since amalgamation, the school has given a great deal of thought to re-designing the curriculum so that it is more meaningful for pupils. Good account is taken of pupils' different ages and abilities who are in the same class, through two-year programmes of study. Teaching time in the juniors is too short, because of time allowed each day for transfer to and from assembly and preparation for lunchtime. This reduces the time available for some subjects and the opportunity to raise standards further.

Planning for English, mathematics and personal, social and health education is good. It ensures that pupils have a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle, personal safety and are well prepared for their future economic well-being. Information and communication technology (ICT) gives pupils good workplace skills. Pupils enjoy the popular after-school clubs, which cover a good range of interests, including the creative arts, sport, crafts, Spanish and ICT. The curriculum is enriched through innovative activities, including French days and African weeks. These, together with visits and visitors to the school, broaden pupils' horizons. There have been recent changes to

the Foundation Stage curriculum, which is having a positive impact on learning. Planning includes a range of indoor and outdoor activities. Plans for independent learning are underway and staff recognise the need to further develop these.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their pastoral care are outstanding. Parents overwhelmingly support this view. Child protection and health and safety procedures are in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure. Induction procedures are well organised, so that children settle quickly into school. Pupils are well supported on their transition to secondary school.

Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is securely underpinned by extensive links to outside support agencies. For example, members of the Dinosaur Club enjoy the activities planned to boost their self-esteem and improve behaviour. Visits by outside specialists, such as the speech and language therapist, help to set up programmes that teachers can follow in lessons to help pupils learn more effectively. The recently introduced target-setting and tracking procedures are helping to raise standards. Teachers have a clear picture of the progress that pupils make and respond quickly to any perceived underachievement. Pupils are aware of their targets and of what they need to do to improve their work. There has been a good rate of progress in teachers' use of these procedures.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteachers have shown outstanding leadership in setting up this new school. They have given very clear direction and encouragement for the development of systems to support the achievement and good progress of pupils. There is good emphasis on ensuring that all pupils have access to learning that is appropriate to their needs. The school's very positive ethos and the integration of teaching and support staff have been achieved in a very short timescale, because of the headteacher's determination to maintain good standards despite the upheaval caused by the amalgamation.

Subject leaders have been given a clear role in contributing to the school's development and are giving a good lead in developing and improving provision for learning. The school rightly has the continued development of their role as a priority this year, so that they have an even fuller picture of the provision for learning. Good self-evaluation procedures have allowed the school to identify accurately what needs to improve and to move quickly on areas of identified weakness.

Governors give good support to the development of the school. They provide a good range of experience and expertise and are keen to develop their skills and knowledge

through training. Parents are well involved in the life of the school through consultation about change and are pleased to have a say in its development.

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.

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	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	1
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	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

Harrowgate Hill Primary School

Thompson Street West

Darlington

County Durham

DL3 0HZ

5 March 2007

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for making our visit to your school so interesting and such fun. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you about the work you do in and for your school.

You all work hard and enjoy your lessons and help each other to learn by behaving very well and listening closely during lessons. We noticed that you take good care of each other outside of lessons and older pupils are very caring towards younger ones. Perhaps that is why your very big school is so calm and seems like a small school, where everyone knows each other well. That is a very difficult thing to achieve and you should all be proud of how welcoming and comfortable you have made your school.

We could see that you are making good progress in your work and that you have a good idea of how to do better because of the targets you aim for. You have teachers who take great care when they mark your work. Your work for the environment and for the children in the Malawi school is impressive. It shows how well you are being prepared for life in the future, by caring for those in need and for the world you live in. Your school is helping you grow into mature and responsible young people.

To help your good school get even better you should keep up the good work you already do. We have discussed the length of your lessons in the juniors and have suggested that the school looks at increasing the time spent on learning. We have also suggested that some pupils need to mix a bit more with others to help their writing skills develop more quickly.

We wish you and your new school all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Fitzpatrick, Mrs Mothersdale and Mrs Ulyatt

Additional Inspectors