

Cockton Hill Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114110
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	295388
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Mary Sewell

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jeff Sutton
Headteacher	Mr Fran Thirling
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
School address	McIntyre Terrace Cockton Hill Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 6HW
Telephone number	01388 602058
Fax number	01388 602058

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Cockton Hill is an average sized junior school. The school is situated in an area of high unemployment and deprivation in South West Durham. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage with very few children whose first language is not English. There are higher than average proportions of pupils taking free school meals and who require additional support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school holds the Sports Activemark, the Eco Friendly and Healthy Schools Award.

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 that provides good value for money. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act of 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The headteacher and his staff have worked relentlessly to improve the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum. This rigorous and wholehearted approach has been well supported by the local authority and has led to a rise in standards in 2006, and even higher standards in 2007. This means that pupils make good progress. However, many more pupils make better progress and obtain higher standards in mathematics and science than they do in English. Boys do not achieve as well as girls in English. Standards in writing still need improvement.

Parents overwhelmingly support the school and are particularly pleased with the way it builds up their children's confidence and self-esteem. This strong emphasis on pupils' personal development means that pupils have a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. They feel safe and happy because they are well known by staff, well respected by other pupils and are confident in their ability to succeed.

Most pupils' regular attendance testifies to their enjoyment of school. Parents and pupils agree that this is a caring school, which gives good support to families. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to take up responsibilities and they are keen to do so. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and its wider community, especially through the school council, and by raising money for charities. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for adult life with above average standards in basic literacy, numeracy and skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Marking has improved, and pupils' targets are set and reviewed regularly. This rigorous and systematic approach has resulted in improved standards. The school's absolute determination to establish pupils' progress has led to some confusion in what information is needed for the pupils' essential next steps in their learning. The systems for monitoring pupils' progress are currently too complex to be fully effective.

The leadership of the school has made good improvement, because coordinators play a full part in monitoring and evaluating their subject areas. The whole process of self-evaluation is good. Governors are more involved in the day-to-day running of the school and make a good contribution to its development. The school is in a good position to consolidate and refine the work of the last 18 months and improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Simplify the existing tracking systems so they provide accurate and useful information for pupils, teachers and parents.
- Improve standards in writing, especially for more able pupils and for boys.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Since the last inspection, the school has focused on strategies to improve standards, especially in literacy. As a result, the school

met and exceeded its targets in 2006 and 2007. Pupils start school in Year 3 with broadly average standards but with weaker literacy skills. They make good progress, achieving above average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards in writing are lower than in other subjects.

The 2006 test results were the best since 2003. Standards in English, mathematics and science were all above average. In the 2006 test results, boys attained higher standards in mathematics and science than in literacy. Fewer pupils attained above average levels in writing than in mathematics and science. The school investigated immediately and found that the difference was directly linked to pupils' lack of confidence when they were writing creatively and at length in other subjects. The school has put in place strategies to address this but inspection evidence and the 2007 results indicate that, although standards in writing are improving, there is more work to be done. This is especially so for more able pupils and for boys.

The 2007 test results demonstrate an improvement on 2006, with nearly all pupils achieving national expectations and more than half of them achieving the higher levels in mathematics and science.

Pupils whose first language is not English or those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils say that they love coming to school, enjoy their lessons and feel listened to and valued. This is reflected in their courtesy and sensitivity towards each other and in their regular attendance.

Pupils feel safe and secure in the school. The rare incidents of anti-social behaviour are dealt with effectively to the satisfaction of pupils and parents. Parents appreciate the support from the local comprehensive school in teaching drama. They say this work is raising their children's confidence and self-esteem.

Pupils are proud of their Healthy Schools Award and are keen to talk about the wide range of sporting activities they are involved in after school. They are well prepared for adult life with good standards of ICT, literacy and numeracy. Pupils are aware of the importance of the community and the economy through a range of entrepreneurial fund-raising activities and their work with the local council on recycling.

Class and school councils provide numerous opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and have a positive impact on the running of the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers use their subject expertise to best advantage and plan effectively for the ways in which pupils learn. Pupils are confident in answering questions and in making contributions in lessons because they have good working relationships with their teachers. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are constantly challenged and expectations raised, as in a lesson on life in Egypt where the pupils learned rapidly about the

various Egyptian trades. Teachers mark their pupils' work thoroughly and monitor their pupils' progress closely. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to assess their own work, which gives them a good understanding of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.

Some teaching is less successful because pupils remain in a whole-class group for too long before they are able to start work. This slows the pace of learning. Currently, there is too much reliance on printed worksheets, especially in literacy, which restricts opportunities for pupils to write with greater freedom and expression. This inhibits the more able pupils in particular.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets statutory requirements. The displays of pupils' work around school demonstrate its considerable breadth. The physical education curriculum, together with out-of-school clubs, promotes regular exercise and healthy lifestyles. Work in the secondary schools, using specialist equipment in an adult environment, prepares pupils well for the future. Pupils' experiences are greatly enriched by out-of-school visits and the many visitors to school. The provision for the development of pupils' key skills in literacy and numeracy is good, with a recent priority on improvement in writing. Provision for developing pupils' ICT skills is satisfactory; major plans for improvements to increase pupils' access to computers are well advanced. Whilst the school makes satisfactory use of software packages to support lower ability pupils, provision for the more able is limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good features. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and all requirements are met. Potential risks in and around school and during visits are carefully assessed in order to keep pupils safe. The range of visitors to school to promote pupils' personal development, for example, and their focus on pupils' health and safety, make a significant contribution to these aspects of care. Teachers gather a wide range of information on pupils' progress and achievement in order to set targets. However, the overall system for this aspect of guidance and support occasionally gives academic information that is at odds with what teachers see in pupils' day-to-day work. The recently introduced 'Progress Book' is beginning to give a much clearer picture of individuals' progress in literacy, when work is compared to levels of the National Curriculum and teachers' assessments are reviewed and confirmed by colleagues. Currently, there are four different tracking systems in place; these procedures are too complex to be fully effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Since the last inspection, the subject coordinators have become an integral part of the school's system of monitoring and self-evaluation; these aspects are now good. The school has been well supported by the local authority and together they have taken immediate action to remedy any weaknesses. This monitoring identified some weaknesses in teaching, which resulted in senior leaders introducing strategies to deploy teachers with specific subject expertise more effectively. As a result, standards and achievement

and teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. The subject coordinators have had further training and are now confident about evaluating their subject areas. The governors have increased their involvement and have begun to seek clarification of the impact of strategies the school has put in place. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and, as the school is now aware of its own strengths and areas to develop, it is in a good position to improve even further.

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Annex A

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 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?	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	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?	3

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

9 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cockton Hill Junior School, Bishop Auckland, County Durham,

DL14 6HW

It was an absolute pleasure to visit your school and talk to so many of you. Mr Watson and I were very impressed with how well you all behaved and took care of each other. The playground 'Buddies' are doing a good job at helping you spend an enjoyable time at playtime. An especially big 'thank you' to the school council who took time to speak to me about your work.

We found that you do well in school and make good progress, so that most of you leave with test results that are above those in other schools. This is because your lessons are good and your teachers know you all very well. It is also because your school is well managed and many of your teachers help the headteacher to find out what needs to be done to make things even better. The governors of the school know your parents and grandparents and are busy joining in some of your lessons so that they get to know what and how well you are doing.

In most of your lessons, the teaching is good but occasionally you fill in too many worksheets, which means you do not get the opportunity to improve your writing. I have asked the teachers to give you more opportunities to write at length. This is important because some of you can attain even higher standards in writing, especially boys. Also, I have asked teachers to record your progress in just one or two simple, but useful ways. This will mean that they will be able to tell you and your parents quickly and accurately how well you are doing in each subject.

Thanks to you and your parents for taking part in this inspection. I wish you all the very best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Sewell

Lead Inspector