

Corporation Road Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134075
Local Authority	Darlington
Inspection number	298605
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Oglesby

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carole Tuckey
Headteacher	Mr Peter King
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2006
School address	Corporation Road Darlington County Durham DL3 6AR
Telephone number	01325 244940
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Corporation Road is a large school near the centre of Darlington. The area is socio-economically below average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. About one quarter are learning English as their second language. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school is part of an Intensive Support Programme designed to raise pupils' attainment. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in January and April 2007 respectively.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. This is a good school which has made significant and rapid progress since the last inspection. At that time, many pupils were not making enough progress in English, attendance was unsatisfactory and there were weaknesses in the curriculum and the Foundation Stage. Some poor behaviour, and bullying, from a small minority led to a high number of exclusions. In a very short period of time, excellent leadership by the new headteacher and his deputy has transformed the school. Pupils are now making good progress because there is good teaching everywhere. They say that they enjoy lessons, are proud of their school and that bullying is a thing of the past. The great majority of parents are delighted by the changes. One typical comment was, 'In my eyes, the school has made a complete U-turn'. The children are happier, concerns are dealt with straight away and even the teachers seem more relaxed.'

These improvements have not yet produced a rise in standards in the test results for Year 6, which have been well below average for several years. This is because there is a backlog of under-achievement and the changes are too recent. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that standards are beginning to rise. Pupils in the present Year 6 are working at levels much closer to those expected for their age. The school's good systems for tracking pupils' progress show that the rate of learning has accelerated in all year groups.

One of the main reasons for better achievement is the consistently good teaching. The new leadership team has given a high priority to support and training for staff. They have recognised and maintained most of the strengths whilst effectively tackling weaknesses. The school expects a lot from its staff but teachers have responded very well and morale is high. Their energy and enthusiasm do not go unnoticed. 'Lessons are fun', said one girl, 'but the fun goes along with the learning'.

Teachers now have a clearer picture of how well all their pupils are doing. As a result, work is well matched to their needs. Lessons are planned carefully so that all can succeed. Pupils say the work they do is challenging but enjoyable. Teachers help them to think about their own learning and show them what they must do to improve. Consequently, pupils feel valued and are developing confidence and self-esteem. They behave responsibly, work hard and are considerate to adults and each other. Personal development is good. Pupils are learning to make sensible decisions, for example on diet, exercise and safety.

Clear leadership and management at all levels are key factors in the school's success. The headteacher, well supported by senior staff, governors and the local authority, has given the school a clear direction and sense of purpose. Everyone knows what is expected of them. There is a firm focus on raising standards. A vital part of this has been to make sure that pupils are happy and feel safe and well cared for. This has been achieved. Parents' confidence has been restored. Leaders have identified the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately and are clear about the way forward. The rapid progress already made gives the school a good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The last inspection found that children were not making enough progress in the youngest classes. This was due to weaknesses in the curriculum and teaching. Since then, this part of the school has been transformed. Progress is now good because of good leadership, effective teaching, strong teamwork, efficient organisation and exciting activities. Expert support from the local authority has been productive and much valued.

Adults make good use of the large spaces available, both inside and out. Children learn from an ever-changing range of activities. These are carefully planned to meet their interests and needs. Consequently, children do not drift from one thing to another; when they have choices they choose sensibly and become absorbed in their work. Adults are clear about the purpose of each activity and they keep useful notes on how each child is achieving. There is a good emphasis on language development and social skills. Nursery and Reception age groups often work together, with small groups taken to quiet areas for extra practice in the first steps of reading, writing and mathematics.

The Foundation Stage is a busy, welcoming and well managed part of the school. It takes good care of its children and works well with parents. Children are making good progress in their personal development and all the areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics by consolidating and then increasing the present rate of progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are beginning to rise and pupils are now achieving well. However, until recently, and at the time of the last inspection, they were not making the progress they should, particularly in English. When pupils joined Year 1, many had not reached the expected standard. Standards by the end of Years 2 and 6 have been consistently below average in the national tests. Standards in English were well below average and declining year on year. The new leadership team has made English a priority. Indications from the most recent tests show that the school has succeeded in reversing this decline.

Children join the Foundation Stage with a range of ability but their standards in language and communication skills are well below those typical for their age. Since the last inspection, teaching and learning in the youngest classes has improved. Children are now making good progress in all areas of learning. They continue to achieve well in Years 1 to 6 because teaching is now good and the whole team is united in its determination to drive up standards.

The school's analysis of previous achievement shows some marked differences in the progress made by groups. For example, those learning English as a second language have often made better progress than those from White British backgrounds. In some years, girls did not achieve as well as boys. However, the school is now rigorously checking the progress of every pupil to make sure they have the teaching and support they need. All groups, including the more able and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are now making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils like coming to school and make the most of all that it offers. They behave well, work sensibly and show respect for others. Some recent arrivals described how everyone made an effort to be kind and welcoming. All pupils say that they enjoy lessons and appreciate the trouble that adults take. 'They really help you a lot and cheer you up when you are down.' These attitudes are reflected in the much improved level of attendance since the last inspection. This has exceeded the school's own targets, though it remains below average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Visits and special events, as well as literature, give pupils glimpses of life in other cultures. In school, pupils from several different backgrounds work and play happily together. They enjoy taking responsibility and making a contribution, for example through the school council or acting as head boy or girl. However, some other pupils said they would like more opportunities to help.

Pupils are learning to live safe, active and healthy lives and make wise decisions. They leave this school with positive attitudes, good social skills and the confidence to face the challenges ahead. They use computers independently, and standards are beginning to rise in English and mathematics. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The previous inspection found that although there was some good teaching and learning, this was not the case in all classes. Since then, teaching has improved considerably, with good teaching everywhere. Pupils are finding the same high expectations in every classroom. This is an important factor in their faster progress and good personal development.

Common strengths lie in the good relationships that adults and pupils enjoy and the efficient way that lessons are planned, prepared and managed. Pupils like the lessons because they are busy, active and stimulating. Teachers explain clearly, using technology very well. They make sure that everyone is challenged but that success is possible. Some pupils in Year 6 thought that, 'They make sure you get the work you are capable of; then they nudge you up.' Pupils are willing to take risks and have a try because encouraging support is never far away. The strong team of teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning and self-esteem. Lessons have a good pace and pupils do not spend long periods listening. Just occasionally, the pace slows a little when teachers do not give enough chances for pupils to show what they can do. In a small number of lessons, chances are missed to check pupils' understanding before moving on. However, these are minor matters for fine tuning and not a major issue. Leaders have invested a great deal in improving the quality of teaching and learning. They have achieved much in a short time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is better than it was at the last inspection because it is well matched to all learners' needs. This is one reason for the improvement in the rate of progress. Teachers and leaders know how well every pupil is doing and work is planned to give everybody chances to

succeed. For example, both the more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have clear plans to show which skills they need to improve. There is a strong focus on improving basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). The school's large investment in technology is having a positive impact on pupils' standards in ICT as well as increasing the effectiveness of the teaching. Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities offered in lessons. These experiences are greatly enhanced by visits and the many clubs.

Teachers are constantly reviewing how well the curriculum is working. They present work in ways which motivate pupils and make learning meaningful. For example, one much-enjoyed recent study, on chocolate, developed skills and knowledge in history, design and technology, literacy and ICT. Pupils' good personal development owes much to the effective programme of personal, social and health education. Visitors, and good links to the community and other schools, enrich the curriculum and help to develop pupils' confidence and social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils. Very positive relationships between staff, pupils and parents help to ensure that everyone is happy and ready to learn. Pupils say they feel safe and that help, or someone to listen, is never far away. 'My child is secure and happy in a nice environment where teachers care for her needs,' wrote one parent. Many pupils said they were pleased that some previous bad behaviour had disappeared. The school provides good advice and guidance to secure pupils' welfare and promote their personal development. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety meet current requirements.

The school has made a good start in helping pupils to think about their own work and how it can be improved. Even the youngest children are encouraged to say what they have learned and whether they understand. By Year 6, pupils are beginning to analyse their own work. Teachers sometimes provide checklists to refer to, so everyone is clear about how to move up a stage. Pupils like these and they use them sensibly. This sort of guidance is helping to raise standards although these strategies are at an early stage.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The headteacher and his deputy have made an outstanding start in bringing the school out of a difficult period. They have recognised weaknesses and tackled them quickly and logically. The renewed sense of purpose in this school has been recognised by parents, staff and the local authority. 'The new team have breathed new life into the school', wrote one parent. Teamwork and pride are evident everywhere.

Leaders are ably supported by governors, senior staff and the local authority. The governing body is well informed and involved in many aspects of the school's work. For example, members regularly join coordinators to thoroughly scrutinise pupils' work. They fully support the school but have not hesitated to challenge when necessary, for example when making a decision about mixed age classes.

Self-evaluation is clear and accurate. Leaders recognise what has been achieved and are quick to give credit to those concerned. However, they are determined to improve further. The impact

on what they have done so far can be seen in much improved behaviour and attitudes, stronger teaching and faster progress. There is clear evidence that all this is beginning to raise standards although the school knows that this remains a priority.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

4 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Corporation Road Community Primary School, Darlington, DL3 6AR

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we visited your school recently. We came to find out how well you are doing. We all agreed that there are lots of good things about your school. You have had a lot of changes this year, with a new headteacher and deputy, improvements to the building and, of course, that wonderful computer suite.

One of the things that we all noticed was the way you help each other and seem to get on so well together. That includes the adults, of course, who work so hard to make sure you are happy and learning. One young man put it very well, 'My teachers and friends help me every step of the way.'

We enjoyed the lessons because your teachers make them interesting and you work hard. This is why you are all making better progress now. It all starts in the Nursery and Reception classes, where there are some lovely things going on, although I was a bit surprised when two big policemen wanted to put me in jail!

You are lucky to have this team of teachers. They are all working together to improve things even more. The school is already much better than it was the last time inspectors came, especially the behaviour, the lessons and the progress you are making.

How could things be even better?

We think that if you keep working the way you are, your standards will rise especially in English and mathematics. These have not been as good as they could be for a few years now. However, there are already promising signs. With your help, the teachers could be celebrating much better results with you by the end of the year. Keep up the good work; you can do it!

Best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely,

Keith Oglesby

Lead Inspector