

Amble First School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 122174 |
| Local Authority | Northumberland |
| Inspection number | 301691 |
| Inspection dates | 11–12 July 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Linda Buller |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | 147 |
| School | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Sheila Little |
| Headteacher | Mrs Joyce Jenkins |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 May 2003 |
| School address | Edwin Street Amble Morpeth Northumberland NE65 0EF |
| Telephone number | 01665 710388 |
| Fax number | 0 |

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|--------------------------|-----------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most other first schools. It is in an area that is average in terms of social and economic advantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than the national average. The number of pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much lower than the national average, although the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is higher. Most pupils are White British, with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds.

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. The school's firm belief that children cannot learn effectively without strong foundations to support their personal, social and emotional needs is one of the main reasons for its success, and for pupils' good achievement. Pupils' personal development is good. They really enjoy school and everything it offers; therefore, attendance is good. Pupils talk knowingly about how safe they feel and know who to turn to if they need help. Parents are happy with their children's education and are strongly supportive of the school.

Children's starting points in Reception are below expected levels, but standards at the end of Year 4 are above average overall, representing good achievement. Good teaching, based on positive relationships and a good, well enriched curriculum, helps to ensure that pupils are interested and learn well. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class where good provision and a wide range of activities support them in making good progress. The good teaching and good progress are maintained in Key Stage 1 and standards are above average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the early years of Key Stage 2. Although standards in reading and writing remain above average, standards in mathematics are average; considering pupil's starting points, this represents satisfactory, rather than good progress. Although there is some good teaching in this key stage, overall it is satisfactory. Not all lessons provide pupils with enough challenge and the marking of pupils' work is not effective enough in helping them to improve.

The support and guidance for pupils' personal development is particularly strong. As a result, pupils behave well and their attitudes to learning are positive. They are well aware of how to stay healthy and respond with enthusiasm to opportunities to be involved in the decision making processes of the school. Pupils work together harmoniously and by the time they leave the school they have developed a good understanding of the skills needed to be an effective citizen. The systems for supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory, but are not applied consistently throughout the school.

The headteacher, senior staff and governors are fully committed to the school's continuous improvement. Responsibility for monitoring the school's success and identifying weaknesses is effectively shared. The actions taken to address the identified priorities have, in the main, been effective. However, action to increase the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2 in mathematics has been slower. Although the school have made adjustments to the curriculum, this is insufficient to bring about higher standards as some weaknesses in teaching remain. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Provide all pupils in Key Stage 2 with a suitable level of challenge, particularly in mathematics.
- Ensure that pupils' work is marked thoroughly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are above the national average. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds progress at similar rates. Good teaching and a wide range of well thought out activities result

in children in the Foundation Stage making good progress. Consequently, by the time they enter Year 1, most have met the early goals set for children of their age. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards reached by pupils at age seven have been consistently above the national average since the last inspection, with the exception of 2006 when results in national tests were broadly average. From entry into school, this cohort contained a larger percentage of less able pupils than in most years. School records and inspection evidence confirm that these pupils made good progress from their starting points. Results for 2007 indicate that standards in the current Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 and standards remain above average in reading and writing. Standards are average in mathematics because a significant minority of pupils do not do as well as they should, due to a lack of continuity in the curriculum and some weaknesses in teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are developing a good awareness of moral and social issues through well planned opportunities in many of their lessons. For example, Year 3 pupils were able to demonstrate a good understanding of the effects of climate change as a focus for developing their literacy skills. Pupils behave well; they mature into polite, friendly individuals who really enjoy school, are keen to work and relish new experiences. Attendance levels are good. Pupils develop a good understanding of their own and other cultural traditions, particularly in art and music. They feel safe in school and report that bullying is not a problem. Pupils have a good understanding of what is needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle and how to follow safe practices. However, this is not always reflected in their actions or the food choices they make at lunchtimes. School councillors take their role in seeking ideas for improvement very seriously; they are confident that they can really make a difference to their school community. Pupils' good achievement in basic skills prepares them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and encourage them to work hard. Pupils respond to this well and this ensures a positive climate for learning in classrooms. Teachers use a good variety of teaching styles and they are ably supported by teaching assistants who make a valuable contribution to the learning of individuals and groups. The importance placed upon group and paired work, especially talk time, helps pupils develop their language, vocabulary and social skills well. Teachers plan conscientiously, but in some lessons in Key Stage 2, this does not result in sufficient challenge for all pupils. This is most common in mathematics, and is one of the reasons why some pupils are not making good progress. Another reason is that pupils' work is not always thoroughly marked, and opportunities are missed to share with pupils what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. This is because of the good range of additional activities and experiences that are offered and the effective links between subjects and provision for pupils' personal development. This results in mature, responsible pupils who are able to make informed choices with due consideration of their own and others' feelings and emotions. The attractive displays around the school show that pupils benefit from a rich curriculum and often reach high standards in their work, particularly in art. The curriculum is not always adapted well enough however, to take account of how well pupils do in Key Stage 1. As a result, the mathematics curriculum in particular at times lacks continuity with pupils repeating work in which they are already competent.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for all pupils well; their pastoral development is given very strong priority so they flourish in the safe, secure atmosphere and become happy, confident learners and community members. Procedures to safeguard pupils meet current government requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities participate fully in all lessons and make good progress because staff provide consistently good support for their learning. Pupils' academic guidance is satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 1 imaginative use is made of targets in literacy and numeracy; consequently, pupils are aware of their progress and what they need to do next to reach even higher standards. Although pupils in Key Stage 2 also have targets for improvement, the use of these as a means of helping pupils to understand how they can improve their work is inconsistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior staff are enthusiastic and committed to improvement. The school works well in partnership with others to foster pupils' well-being. Steady improvement since the last inspection has maintained above average standards. A good range of new initiatives has been undertaken to successfully combine pupils' academic and personal development. Through effective procedures for evaluating its own effectiveness, the school has a good understanding of what it needs to improve. Pupils' performance is monitored well; actions taken have improved standards in pupils' writing, but there are still too many pupils who do not make quick enough progress in mathematics. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and they are refining their monitoring procedures to develop more rigorous evaluation of the school's work.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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| 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 | Yes |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|---|---|
| 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

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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

16 July 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Amble First School, Northumberland, NE65 0EF

Thank you very much for your friendly welcome on my recent visit to your school. I agree with you that your school is good and I was impressed with the sensible suggestions you have made to make it even better. Your teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and you help them with this by behaving well and always trying your best. I am pleased that you feel safe in school and that you are learning how to stay fit and be healthy.

You all do well by the time you are seven with your reading, writing and mathematics. I have asked the school to make sure that the work given to older pupils is always challenging enough to help them to continue to reach high standards, especially in mathematics. I know that you are all keen to do as well as can. Therefore, I have asked the school to make sure that your work is always marked so that all of you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve.

I wish you every success with your future learning and thank you once again for sharing your work with me.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector