

Ellington First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122198
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	301707
Inspection dates	16–17 May 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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	182
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Allan
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Vardy
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2003
School address	Warkworth Drive Ellington Morpeth Northumberland NE61 5HL
Telephone number	01670 860769
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Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size first school, with a nursery. It serves the village communities of Ellington and Cresswell near the Northumbrian coast and there is an increasing number of requests for places from outside this area. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Pupils come from a range of social circumstances. Their attainment when they start school is broadly average. About one quarter of the pupils are identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this is higher than most schools. The proportion has increased recently. The percentage known to be entitled to free school meals is below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ellington is an outstanding school, which gives excellent value for money. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and achieve extremely well. The school is very popular with parents, who speak highly of its leadership, teaching, and the quality of care. Parents sum this up as ‘an excellent centre of learning, a key focus of the village and the best possible start to their education’. The school is a busy and harmonious community where very good relationships help pupils to succeed academically and their personal development is excellent. Pupils leave the school as responsible and thoughtful young people who are very well prepared for the next school.

Achievement is excellent and standards are high because teaching and learning are outstanding. Behaviour is excellent and pupils want to learn. They make a good start in the Foundation Stage, where the provision is good and well matched to the needs of young children. They learn to work and play together and make good strides in all areas of learning with the great majority reaching or exceeding the level expected of this age. Outstanding progress in Years 1 to 4 leads to high standards. The results of the teachers’ assessments made at the end of Year 2 show that standards are above average for this age in reading, writing and mathematics. By Year 4, these standards have been raised further and more than half the pupils achieve high levels in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress because of the excellent support they receive.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Excellent classroom management supports teachers’ high expectations of work and behaviour. Pupils learn well because they find lessons fun and challenging. Work is very well planned to pupils’ ability and teachers constantly look for better ways to inspire pupils and help them to understand. An excellent curriculum is another reason for the school’s success. Learning is enriched by expert visitors; for example, in health, sport, music and drama. The school has achieved Activemark Gold, and Healthy School Awards, which illustrate pupils’ excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. Interesting visits out of school and special events bring learning to life in many subjects.

The quality of its care, guidance and support for every pupil is outstanding. Parents appreciate that all staff have the welfare of their children at the forefront of all activities. The school has introduced good systems to involve the pupils in thinking about their own learning. In some classes, pupils explain clearly what they have achieved, why it is good and exactly what they must do to move up to the next level. This is working well to help them to make progress; however, these strategies are not yet used consistently across the school.

This is an outward looking school, where adults are just as keen to learn as the pupils. For example, the involvement in a national scheme to find innovative ways to deploy the expertise of teaching assistants and teachers has led to excellent teamwork, which benefits all pupils. This experience has been shared with other schools and has increased the many links that exist with the local community and other organisations.

The school’s success is the result of outstanding leadership and management. The headteacher and deputy headteacher set a clear agenda for enjoyment and excellence in all that the school does. Well-informed governors and hard work from all staff support them well. Self-evaluation is accurate because the school is relentless in evaluating what is working well and seeking ways to drive up standards further. As a result, improvement since the last inspection is very good and the school has excellent capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend to all classes the good practice seen of sharing with pupils what they have achieved and what they must do next to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is excellent and standards are consistently high by the time the pupils leave for their middle school. Pupils make outstanding progress because of the high quality of care and teaching they receive and because of their own very positive attitudes. From an average starting point, children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and almost every child reaches or exceeds the expected level by the end of the Reception class. Progress is excellent in Years 1-4. The teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 show that pupils have achieved consistently above average levels since the last inspection in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's most recent assessments in Year 4 show that a half of the pupils are working at standards that are higher than usual for their age in English, mathematics and science. The school sets challenging targets and in most years exceeds them.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent care and support. Many of these make outstanding progress, some overcoming significant barriers on the way. More able pupils also do very well because as they say the work set is challenging. Girls generally out-perform boys in reading and writing, but not in mathematics. However, the gender gap narrows as pupils move up the school because teachers are especially good at matching work to pupils' interests as well as abilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They love coming to school and make the most of all that it offers. Parents appreciate this, as one wrote, 'He wakes every morning looking forward to coming here.' Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They feel secure and valued because of the excellent relationships and the very positive ethos that has been established throughout the school. As a result, behaviour is exceptional, even for the few who sometimes find it difficult to behave well. Attendance is average. The great majority of pupils attend regularly and are punctual although a few take holidays during term time.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They appreciate the support they get from their friends, enjoy helping others and show responsible attitudes to younger children. They enjoy meeting visitors and are a credit to the school on visits. Pupils are increasingly aware of other cultures and able to deal with other points of view. They are enthusiastic fund raisers for worthy causes.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy and safe life. They happily take on responsibility and have a thorough understanding of their role in the school and the local community. Their very good basic skills, positive attitudes and excellent social skills prepare them exceptionally well for their future lives, in school and out.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding and parents recognise how this contributes to the excellent progress their children make. Lessons sustain a balance between being purposeful, stimulating and enjoyable. Teachers use an imaginative range of methods to keep pupils interested and help them to succeed. Pupils say that learning is fun and that teachers explain clearly and patiently. Teachers match work correctly to learners' needs and make sure that everyone is included and can succeed. Pupils like and respect their teachers, try hard to improve and know that extra help is at hand. Consequently, they concentrate well and make excellent use of all that is on offer. The effective team of teaching assistants are fully involved in lessons. Their expertise is helping to improve standards and raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem. In an extremely small number of lessons, the pace of learning slows at times because explanations go on just a little too long.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum makes this school a vibrant and stimulating place to learn. Special events, such as the week devoted to mathematics, add excitement and allow pupils time to become really involved with their learning. Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy an active, carefully planned curriculum from the start. There is a good balance between adult-directed work and opportunities for children to make their own choices. Throughout the school, personal development is central to the curriculum. A well organised programme helps pupils to lead healthy and safe lives and deal with social or emotional upsets. The provision for those with learning difficulties is outstanding. School leaders, teachers and the excellent support team work together very well, consequently these pupils make great strides in their personal development and academic work.

Visits, visitors and clubs are used extremely well to enrich the curriculum and inspire pupils. In a much enjoyed visit to Alnwick Castle, for example, pupils learned a lot about local history and produced some excellent writing, art and drama. Many experts come to share their skills; for example, in music, sport, drama and dance. Pupils' skills are recognised in the school's achievement of many awards including ArtsMark Gold

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with parents who described the school as, 'a very special place, with an amazing community spirit'. The school values every pupil and provides a safe, welcoming and stimulating environment for them. Pupils with learning difficulties do well here because of sensitive care and excellent links with outside agencies to further provide for their needs. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils, child protection and risk assessments are in place and meet government guidelines.

Guidance for academic development is effective. As a result, teachers track pupils' progress well and supply additional help when needed. The school works hard to help pupils to evaluate and think about their own learning. Many of them identify what they have to do to make their work better but this good practice is not yet consistent throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are excellent at all levels. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have an energetic presence around the school and are involved in every part of the school's work. Partnerships with other agencies and parents are excellent. Parents appreciate the way that leaders know their children well, make themselves available and deal with problems promptly. One parent describes the school as a fantastic school where the staff deal professionally and efficiently with anything that comes their way.

Leaders are ably supported by effective and well informed governors. Every adult in the school makes a contribution to leadership and management. Teamwork is excellent, everyone is involved and morale is high. The school has successfully achieved Investor in People status. Staff exchange ideas with visitors and evaluate their own work by visiting other schools.

A key to the school's success is the absence of any complacency. There is a consistent drive to make improvements that contribute to pupils' enjoyment and enthusiasm, as well as raising standards. Self-evaluation is outstanding and is firmly rooted in the tracking of pupils' progress and the monitoring of teaching. The capacity to improve further is therefore excellent.

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
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

21 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ellington First School, Northumberland, NE61 5HL

As you know, we visited your school recently for two days. I am writing to thank you for being so helpful and willing to talk to us. We had an enjoyable two days and enjoyed seeing you and your teachers in action. Some of you said you were happy and proud to come to Ellington, we think you should be.

We think that this is an excellent school and some of the best things about your school are as follows.

- The way all the adults help each other and work together. They are a great team who work so hard to make sure you are happy, safe and learning. Perhaps this is why the children also get on so well.
- We enjoyed lots of the lessons; your teachers work so hard to make them interesting and keep you thinking. I remember the monkey using his card in the cashpoint machine - what a good way to learn to count money quickly.
- We know you enjoy all the extra things the teachers provide. We are thinking of the sport, visits and visitors, and the special weeks like 'maths week'.
- At playtime and lunchtime I don't think we have ever seen so many enjoyable games going on at the same time. Full marks to all the yellow fleeces!

There were lots of other things of course, but there is not enough space for everything.

We have one suggestion which could make your progress even better.

- We liked the way that some of you could talk about your work, what was good about it and what you and your teacher should do next to make it better. Even the young children in the reception class were starting to think about this. Some of you knew about 'success criteria' and liked reading the advice the teachers put in your books. You also liked the 'must do, should do and could do' idea to make sure you were stretched. We think more of this would help you improve even more.

Yours sincerely

Keith Oglesby and Tony Kemp

The inspection team