

# Blyth Horton Grange First School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122254
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	301742
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Rosemary Rodger

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	348
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr John Whiteman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Carol Oliver
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	Kitty Brewster Blyth Northumberland NE24 4RE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01670 353503
<b>Fax number</b>	01670 354276

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<b>Age group</b>	3–9
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an above-average sized first school. Most pupils are White British. An above-average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and rising. The school was led by an acting headteacher during the inspection.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing, or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Standards in the school have remained below average since the last inspection and have fallen further in the past two years. Standards by the end of Year 4 are significantly below average. Pupils' achievement is inadequate because too little progress is made from the end of the Foundation Stage to Year 2. This is because the quality of teaching and the curriculum do not provide pupils with a secure basis for learning. The teaching of groups which have been arranged by ability for literacy and numeracy in Years 1 and 2 is having an adverse effect on pupils' learning because it is leading to disruption and subsequent increase in misbehaviour. The expectations of the pupils in much of the teaching are too low and lessons are often dull. Pupils are insufficiently involved and often passive, which also leads to some disruptive behaviour. Information from assessment is not always used as effectively as it could be to plan lessons that ensure pupils learn adequately. This is a consistent feature of boys' learning and for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Where teaching is based on well planned activities that are matched to pupils' needs there is good progress. This is a strong feature in the Foundation Stage, where the teaching is good. The curriculum fails to provide pupils with much enjoyment, and opportunities to develop key literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are inadequate.

Pupils' personal development is inadequate. However, behaviour around school is improving because of the recent actions taken to support several pupils who display challenging behaviour. Attendance is below average, although steps have been taken to improve it, and punctuality is also getting better as a result of recent changes. Pupils understand the need to eat healthily and the value of exercise. They all spoke of their enjoyment of sports, although many lamented the lack of a football team. By the time they leave school, many pupils are ill-prepared for middle school because of their weak basic skills.

The school provides inadequate care, guidance and support. Although pupils are generally made to feel safe and secure, academic support does not provide them with sufficient guidance on how to improve. There is inconsistency in implementing revised procedures and a lack of awareness of what pupils are able to do and what they need to do next. The recently introduced whole-school system for target-setting has not been in place long enough to help pupils understand how this can improve their learning. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is ineffective. Parents are rightly concerned about their children's education and, in particular, the behaviour of some pupils.

Despite the determination, sense of direction and encouragement provided by the temporary acting headteacher, who had only been in post for two weeks at the time of the inspection, the school's leadership and management are inadequate. The school lacks the capacity to improve. There has been limited progress on addressing the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. There is no school development plan, and the lack of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning means that important actions needed to rectify weaknesses have not been identified. The impact of subject leaders is ineffective because they have not developed the skills necessary to influence the pupils' learning. Governance of the school is inadequate,

and for too long the governing body has not challenged the school over the legacy of underachievement. The school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of provision and the leadership of the Foundation Stage are good. The Nursery has been subject to recent radical review and, as a consequence, creates a good climate for learning. The structure and organisation of the classroom promote the development of basic skills well. Children enter the Foundation Stage with levels of learning that are well below those typical for their age. Teachers plan exciting activities and monitor the progress of the children carefully and, as a result, all groups of children make good progress. Teaching is good: planning for learning provides lots of activities linked together in exciting and imaginative ways. A good example of this was the 'dial' theme which provided a central focus for learning through a series of linked activities. There are many child-initiated tasks and activities that promote the development of speaking and listening. Assessment systems are well established and effective. They are instrumental in supporting the children's good progress. Children are well cared for and kept safe. They receive a good start to their education and parents have many opportunities to participate.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the leadership and management of the school at all levels.
- Raise standards in English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum, in particular to encourage more involvement of pupils in their learning.
- Establish a uniform system to improve the behaviour of pupils.
- Make better provision to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Standards are significantly below average and pupils' achievement is inadequate. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children reach levels of development that are broadly typical for their age in all areas of learning. The good progress children make in the Foundation Stage is not maintained in Key Stage 1 because of serious shortcomings in teaching, inadequate provision for pupils organised into groups by ability for the teaching of literacy and numeracy and some inadequate behaviour. The school's results in the national assessments at the end of Year 2 have generally remained below average for some time. They have declined markedly in the past two years. Standards of work seen during the inspection confirm the decline and were well below those expected in Years 1 and 2. Most pupils do not make enough progress from their starting points at the end of Reception. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make less progress than similar pupils nationally. In Years 3 and 4 progress in mathematics is satisfactory, but it is inadequate in reading and writing. Standards by the end of Year 4 are significantly below average overall.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 4**

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are inadequate. Pupils are generally friendly and courteous to visitors. Their

behaviour is satisfactory in lessons that are interesting, but too many pupils find it difficult to conform to the school's expectations of good behaviour. Misbehaviour increases in lessons where teaching is mundane. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions has increased in recent months. Attendance has fallen this term and is below average. Pupils enjoy physical education and all sports. They blossomed when describing their joy when receiving an award. Pupils are aware of the need to eat healthily and they enjoy growing vegetables and providing healthy broth for their parents. Charity fund-raising develops pupils' understanding of communities well. Pupils identified bullying and misbehaviour as concerns, but felt there was someone to turn to for help. They spoke positively of the 'Place2Be'. Pupils are not well prepared for future learning because of their low basic skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 4**

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate because too many pupils fail to make satisfactory progress. Planning is variable and too little account is taken of the needs and interests of the pupils. This leads to misbehaviour that slows their progress. Expectations are frequently too low and teachers seldom provide explanations and demonstrations to help pupils understand what they are expected to learn. Pupils struggle to know what to do as a result. There is too much emphasis placed on the use of worksheets, drawing pictures and copying tasks so that lessons are often dull. The support provided by teaching assistants is inadequate because they are underused in parts of lessons. Where there is good teaching and learning, the pace is brisk and pupils' learning is helped by clear instructions and probing questions to check they understand what to do next. Pupils' work is marked regularly but insufficient attention is paid to the pupils' targets so few know how to improve their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 4**

The curriculum is inadequate. Although plans follow some of the national guidelines, they do not reflect the interests or needs of the pupils. Too much reliance is placed on curricular plans available from websites and on commercial schemes of work; these are used without sufficient adaptation to cater for individual learning needs. As a result, the curriculum is basic and dull and does not inspire pupils to learn. The arrangements to group the pupils in Years 1 and 2 for literacy and numeracy based on their prior attainment are ineffective; they cause too much disruption and lead to an increase in misbehaviour. Provision for literacy is inadequate. New resources are not used efficiently and the school has been slow to identify opportunities for developing basic skills in different subjects. There are too few opportunities for pupils to engage in extra-curricular activities after school.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 4**

Procedures to ensure that pupils are safeguarded meet requirements. Child protection arrangements are satisfactory. The reintroduction of the 'nurture' room provides a haven for vulnerable pupils. This is beginning to improve the serious misbehaviour of a few first thing in the morning. Recent steps taken to improve punctuality are having a good impact. Guidance for academic learning is inadequate because there are too many procedures which are not

implemented consistently. A system to track the progress of pupils in each year group is available in school but is not widely used. There are significant shortcomings in the support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities resulting in their inadequate progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 4**

Leadership and management are inadequate. The lack of systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school means that there many weaknesses that have not been tackled since the last inspection. Evaluation is not embedded in the school's practice and there is no school development plan to guide improvement strategies. As a result, underachievement over a number of years has not been identified and pupils' learning has suffered as a result. Despite the determination, sense of direction and encouragement provided by the temporary acting headteacher, staff morale is low. Subject leadership has had little influence on learning because leaders have not been provided with time or been allowed to disseminate training with sufficient urgency to, for example, improve the quality of teaching. There has been no use made of the targets set. Governance is inadequate. The governing body has not held the school to account over falling standards or responded to the concerns of parents regarding the behaviour of a minority of pupils.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	4
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	4
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	4
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

22 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blyth Horton Grange First School, Northumberland, NE24 4RE

Thank you all for making me welcome and for telling me such a lot about your school. The improvements to the Foundation Stage are good and I really liked the cosiness of the gazebo. However, there is a lot to be done to make your school a better place to be where you can all learn as well as you ought. Your school needs help to do this, which is why you may hear the phrase 'special measures'. This means that help will now be given and changes made for the better.

These are some main areas for improvement.

- There are many children in school who find it difficult to behave and concentrate in lessons. Your school is now going to work on this so you are not distracted in lessons.
- Some of you said that your favourite enjoyment was playing outside and taking part in sports. The activities you are provided with in class need to be more exciting and enjoyable and you need to be doing much better in your reading, writing and mathematics. You can help by listening and working as hard as you can to reach higher standards.
- Not everyone in school has been sure about which are the most important changes needed and how to make them. Your school is going to produce better plans so that all this is much clearer.

There are going to be many changes in school over the next few months, and inspectors will return to check that improvements are being made. It is up to you all to work hard and help make the changes as quickly as possible so that soon your school will be one of the best.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector