

Walkergate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108478
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	309701
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Sheridan

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	476
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elizabeth Armstrong
Headteacher	Mr Don Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2005
School address	Sutton Street Walkergate Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE6 4SD
Telephone number	0191 2655737
Fax number	0191 2650580

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Walkergate Primary School is a much larger than average school situated in the east of Newcastle upon Tyne. It serves an area of economic deprivation and the number of pupils who are entitled to a free school meal is well above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average, although the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is below average. The school is part of the Benfield Action Zone. The school has achieved many awards including the Healthy Schools Award, Activemark and Investors in Children. The school is currently undergoing a major rebuild.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Walkergate Primary School provides a satisfactory education. The majority of parents appreciate the efforts the school makes to work with them when problems arise and several told us that their children really enjoy their education. 'The school has always endeavoured to create a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. My son has enjoyed going since day one and I feel he has gained a good, positive education,' captures the view of many parents.

Overall, standards are below but close to average and pupils make satisfactory progress. There are small signs that standards are on the rise, especially at Key Stage 1, but the picture is uneven. This partly reflects inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. Standards at Key Stage 1 have fallen over the last few years to well below the national average. Although pupils make satisfactory progress from an often low start, some pupils underachieve. The school has recognised the need to reverse the downward trend and recent improvements in provision are beginning to boost pupils' progress. Pupils with particular learning needs are starting to achieve well. Over recent years at Key Stage 2 the overall rate of pupils' progress has been rising. Evidence from the school's tracking of progress indicates that the current Year 6 pupils are expected to reach challenging targets.

Leadership is satisfactory overall. Leaders at all levels work very hard to create a happy and vibrant school where pupils feel well cared for and safe. A few parents expressed concerns about the impact of the rebuild including safety implications. Inspection evidence shows that the school has good plans and procedures in place to ensure pupils' safety and minimise the disruption caused by the upheaval. The leadership team has successfully driven improvements in teaching and learning that have led to improved progress in Key Stage 2, particularly in writing. However, they have been rather slower to recognise the importance of halting the decline in standards in Key Stage 1 and the school improvement plan does not identify all areas where improvement is needed. The school was overgenerous in its evaluation of its effectiveness but mostly accurate in terms of broad priorities.

Teaching is mainly satisfactory with some that is better. Where teaching is good, pupils are engaged and excited by their work and make good progress. Pupils usually know what they can do to improve, particularly in writing. In satisfactory lessons, learning is less focused and work is often poorly matched to learners' needs and abilities. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress. In these lessons, enjoyment of learning is satisfactory rather than good.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The statutory requirements are met and sufficient time is allocated for all subjects. However, in some year groups there is too narrow a focus on the delivery of basic skills of literacy and numeracy without the opportunity for pupils to develop these skills in other subjects.

Pupils are very well supported in school; they are well cared for and feel safe. Effective systems ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified and good quality support is provided. Although this system is relatively new, this group of pupils are beginning to make good progress. Effective support is provided to families through a parent support advisor and the school works effectively with other agencies to support vulnerable individuals and groups.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are well behaved around school and their attitude in lessons is usually positive. They make healthy choices and understand the importance of a healthy diet and exercise.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The provision in the Reception year is satisfactory. Children enter school with skills that are well below those of typical four-year-olds. They have limited personal and communication skills and little understanding of literacy and early mathematical concepts. Although progress is satisfactory, by the time they enter Year 1, their attainment remains well below expectations. Induction procedures are good and staff show good levels of care for all children. Consequently children settle well into school. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Staff listen carefully to children, are patient and attend to their needs. As a result, children grow in confidence, behave well and work and play amicably with each other. The curriculum is satisfactory and is planned through all six areas of learning. However, learning is often not tightly focused on the small learning steps children need in order to make sustained progress. Activities are balanced between those directed by adults and those from which children can choose. However, it is not always clear what children are intended to learn during self-chosen activities. Leadership is satisfactory. The school is beginning to use data to track children's progress and identify strengths and weaknesses in provision. The action plan recognises the need to accelerate progress but this is yet to be realised.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Ensure that basic skills are practised and developed across an exciting and rich curriculum.
- Ensure Foundation Stage provision is tightly focused on small learning steps.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Last year's Year 6 made good progress in Key Stage 1 and reached broadly average standards at the age of seven. They made satisfactory progress in English and mathematics and good progress in science while in Key Stage 2. They reached standards at the end of Key Stage 2 that were broadly in line the national average. Rates of progress in Key Stage 2 have increased over the past three years. Tracking suggests that, with the additional support being provided, the current Year 6 are expected to reach challenging targets.

Assessments taken by seven-year-olds show standards have fallen in Key Stage 1 over the past five years. As a consequence the pupils who entered Year 3 in the last two years did so with standards overall that were well below average. The school has recognised this trend and recently enhanced systems to better track pupils' progress and support them with specialist teaching and extra help in class. This is beginning to have an impact. Targets for the current Year 2 suggest that pupils are also on track to reach higher standards than last year overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school is successful in creating an attractive and welcoming environment in which pupils learn. Pupils value their education as a means to finding good jobs. Pupils behave well in and around the school and follow the rules well. Their efforts are justly rewarded during 'golden time'. Pupils are friendly, polite and helpful. A clear understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle is shown through regular physical activity and a good diet; for example, they understand why lunchboxes have to be free from sweets. Pupils feel safe in school because there is someone to turn to should they need support. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good overall. The school has good links with the local church and pupils consider moral and spiritual issues reflectively during assemblies. However, pupils' awareness of the multicultural world in which we live is limited. Pupils are well aware of the needs of others and are successful in raising money for charities. They have good collaborative skills and are adequately prepared for the future. Good links have been established with the local secondary schools to help prepare pupils for the next phase in their education. Attendance is satisfactory. It is improving due to the work of an educational welfare officer who visits the school regularly and works with families to ensure pupils come to school regularly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are examples of good teaching throughout the school where strategies are in place to ensure pupils make good progress. In these lessons pupils are engaged and motivated. Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy their learning. However, too much of the teaching is satisfactory. In these lessons, work is insufficiently matched to pupils' needs and abilities and progress is slower. As a result, pupils do not enjoy their learning as much.

Improving guidance offered to pupils in good lessons and throughout the school in writing is leading to improved progress. However, inconsistencies in marking and the guidance offered means that pupils in some classes do not know what they can do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. A full curriculum is provided with sufficient time allocated to each subject area. The school, rightly, focuses on developing pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills. However, opportunities to practise these skills across different subject areas are limited.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support teaching and learning. The use of ICT is a regular feature of lessons.

A broad range of enrichment activities and clubs, including sport, art and cookery and instrumental tuition complement the curriculum. Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to participate in an activity-based residential visit to the Kingswood Centre. These activities help pupils develop their awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. A programme of

educational visits make learning more interesting for pupils, as does the range of visitors who add real life experience to the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes very good care of its pupils. Risk assessments are undertaken and effective. Comprehensive systems and arrangements are in place to minimise any upheaval caused by the current rebuild. Playtime supervision is good with effective systems to manage and minimise poor behaviour. Safeguarding procedures for ensuring that children are protected are in place. The school provides good pastoral care. Teaching assistants effectively help children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities during lessons. There are very good links with external agencies to make sure that pupils who have the greatest need are cared for well. The school works effectively with a Parent Support Advisor who provides guidance and support for parents so that they can better support their children.

The school is beginning to use their systems that track pupils' progress to ensure pupils receive extra help in lessons when they need it. In classes, teachers are beginning to make good use of the information they have about pupils to help them focus better on what they need to learn next. Most pupils are clear about their individual learning targets in writing. However, they are less clear in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school recognises the challenge it faces in raising standards particularly in Key Stage 1. Procedures introduced to monitor progress means that there is now a sharper focus on improving the levels of progress made by pupils. This is beginning to impact on achievement in the school.

Subject leaders work competently to address school priorities. They are confident in their subject knowledge and are committed to the school improvement agenda. Governance of the school is good. Governors are knowledgeable about the work of the school and are committed to school improvement, acting well as critical friends. They are involved in self-evaluation and have a secure awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The issues from the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The whole school team is determined in their drive to improve the standards. The school has begun to use data to identify its strengths and areas for development. However, there has been insufficient time to see how well this information is being used to make further improvements. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
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

13 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Walkergate Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 4SD

As you may know, I came with Alan Sergison and Gianna Ulyatt to inspect your school recently. We know that your school is currently being rebuilt. Your teachers have done a really good job of organising the classrooms, playground and school day so that you fit into the limited space available whilst the new school is being finished.

We found that your school gives you a satisfactory education. We found that the adults who work with you in school are very good at looking after you and making sure you feel safe and well cared for.

Over the past few years, pupils have not done as well in Reception and in Years 1 and 2 as they did in the past. We know that your school is aware of this and is starting to make sure that you do as well as you can in your first three years at school.

We also know that, while many of you enjoy school, some of you told us that you occasionally get bored when you seem to do too much English and mathematics. We have asked your teachers to look at ways to help you develop these really important skills in different subjects so that you find learning more interesting. We were really pleased to find that some of your teachers have already researched how other schools are doing this.

I would like to finish by saying that we were particularly pleased to see that you were really well behaved. You really are a credit to your school and families.

I wish you all the very best for the future and I hope you enjoy the facilities in your new school.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan

Lead Inspector