

Forest Hall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108605
Local Authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	309739
Inspection dates	12–13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster HMI

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	302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Snedden
Headteacher	Ms Carmel Parker
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Delaval Road Forest Hall Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE12 9BA
Telephone number	0191 2008341
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Forest Hall Primary School is a larger than average sized primary school. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than average. There are very few pupils from a minority ethnic background or who are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than that found nationally, but there are a slightly higher proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school has achieved Active Mark and the Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Forest Hall Primary School provides a satisfactory education for pupils. Following a recent period of instability the school is now more settled but still faces some challenges. This has understandably been a concern for some parents. However, staffing is now more stable and there is a shared commitment amongst staff and governors to improve the school. This has been recognised by some parents, one of whom said this is 'a lovely school, constantly improving'.

The headteacher provides good leadership and has a very clear vision for the future of the school. She is highly committed to raising standards of achievement for pupils. Several subject leaders are new to their role and they are very keen to contribute to raising standards. However, their role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards in their subjects is underdeveloped. Governors provide appropriate challenge and support to the school and are aware of the strengths and areas to be developed. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills which are broadly typical of their age and are making good progress in Nursery and Reception because of the good quality of care and education they receive. This is an improvement from their previous levels of satisfactory progress. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6, although there was a dip in results in 2007, particularly in writing. In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils make only satisfactory progress because teaching is satisfactory. There is a lack of challenge in too many lessons and not all pupils understand what they have to do to improve their work. Systems to track the progress of pupils and set individual targets are not fully embedded or used consistently across the school. This prevents many pupils from making good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported appropriately and this enables them to make satisfactory progress.

Provision for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory and steps are being taken to strengthen aspects of teaching and assessment so that the rate of pupils' progress is increased. There is a whole school initiative in place to raise standards in writing and this is now beginning to have an impact, although there are not enough opportunities for writing in different subjects. The curriculum is satisfactory and fulfils statutory requirements. Pupils benefit a great deal from a wide variety of visits and visitors to school. Participation rates in extra curricular activities are high and most groups are full. Pupils enjoy opportunities to develop their talents and skills, for example, in learning to play a musical instrument, learning a modern foreign language or taking part in activities, such as a residential experience at an outdoor activity centre for older pupils.

The care and support for pupils is good. There are very good relationships between adults and pupils. They are happy to approach staff if they have a problem and feel safe in school and free from bullying. They are assisted in this because of the role played by older pupils as peer mentors, the school 'Owls'. Reception children are comfortable in the dining hall and around school because they all have a 'Big Friend' from Year 6 who looks after them. Pupils contribute well to the community by being involved in fundraising for a wide number of charities. They have a good awareness of healthy lifestyles and the importance of diet and exercise. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and one four year old child told his parents that school 'makes me learn well'. However, attendance has declined in recent months, partly due to pupils being

out of school on family holidays during term time. Consequently, attendance is now only satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage made broadly average progress in previous years, but current pupils are making good progress from their starting points. This is because of the good quality of education and care provided. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of pupils well. There are many opportunities for children to experience aspects of learning both indoors and outdoors. In the Reception classes, children enjoy learning about mini-beasts as well as developing their counting skills. Very effective use of puppets engages and motivates children in their learning. There is a good balance of whole-class, group and child initiated activities. Induction arrangements are very effective and staff work closely as a team to ensure continuity in learning for children. Children's personal development is good. Children behave well, demonstrate good manners and show care and consideration for one another. In the Nursery, children are developing good speaking and listening skills as shown by a circle time activity in which children were able to explain what they were good at doing in a full sentence. They listened carefully to one another and the activity greatly enhanced their confidence and self-esteem. They are aware of healthy eating and during snack time one young child said, 'Pears are good for you'. Children raised a large sum of money through their participation in the 'Big Toddle'. The staff work very effectively as a team and have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the provision. They are constantly seeking ways to improve and this is one reason why children are having such a good start to their education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed whole school tracking and target setting systems so they are used consistently by all teachers.
- Ensure teachers use accurate assessment information in order to raise standards, particularly in writing.
- Monitor the quality of teaching and learning more rigorously to ensure that lessons are challenging and consistently good or better.
- Develop the role of subject leaders.

A small proportion of 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

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are broadly average. At the beginning of the Foundation Stage, children demonstrate levels of skills typical of those expected for their age. Evidence seen during the inspection, shows that children currently in the Foundation Stage are making good progress. Since 2004 standards have been broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1, reflecting the satisfactory progress pupils make in Years 1 and 2. The school's results in the 2007 national assessments for seven year olds were average. Nevertheless, at the higher levels in reading and mathematics standards were below average. Pupils make only satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6 because the teaching lacks sufficient challenge. The trend of results of national tests for eleven year olds shows that they reach standards which are broadly average.

Results in the 2007 tests show that some pupils achieved higher than the expected standards, especially in mathematics where the higher level results were at the national average. However, results were below average in English because progress in writing is a weak aspect of the pupils' performance. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the satisfactory support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, but a very small number of pupils cause minor disruption when they are not fully engaged in their learning. Most pupils enjoy school and the very large majority attend regularly. Attendance has previously been above average. However, there has been a decline in attendance in recent months partly because of pupils being taken out of school for family holidays during term time. Consequently, attendance is now only satisfactory. Pupils are aware of healthy lifestyles and enjoy opportunities to take exercise. They say they feel safe and free from bullying. School Councillors are proud of their role and pupils feel they are listened to and that their views are taken into account. They contributed to the homework policy within school and also provided ideas for the development of the wildlife garden. School 'Owls', who act as peer mentors, play an important role in supporting younger pupils at playtimes. Reception pupils are allocated 'Big Friends' from Year 6, who support them in settling into school. Through fundraising activities, pupils also contribute well to the wider community. The personal skills and qualities they develop prepare them well for working life and the development of their basic skills is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their awareness of other cultures is developing through opportunities to learn about other countries, for example, in geography week and through celebrating different festivals such as Diwali.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are only satisfactory because too few lessons sufficiently challenge the pupils'. Teachers plan lessons to provide a range of activities, but teachers often talk for too long which slows down the pace of learning and limits opportunities for pupils to work together. Teachers do not always use questions effectively to ascertain what pupils know or to develop their thinking. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in some classes which has impeded pupils' progress. Pupils enjoy their lessons and benefit more when they are actively involved in their learning. Interactive whiteboards are well used to enhance teaching and learning, but opportunities for pupils to use computers to help them learn are sometimes missed. Although marking informs pupils what they have achieved it does not always clearly identify what they have to do to improve. Teaching assistants ensure pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The needs of all children in the Foundation Stage are successfully met. In Key Stages 1 and 2, all subjects are adequately planned and a good emphasis is given

to developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The provision for information and communication technology has improved, particularly the use of interactive whiteboards. However, opportunities are missed to use computers effectively in some lessons, for example, for research. There is not yet an overall curriculum plan and subjects are taught separately. Consequently, there are not enough opportunities for using literacy and numeracy in other subjects. The curriculum fulfils statutory requirements and satisfactorily meets the needs of pupils. The curriculum is enhanced very well by a broad range of visits and visitors. Pupils enjoy opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument and some are given opportunities to learn French and German. Participation rates in extra curricular activities, such as Irish dancing, school choir and cross country running are high.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The care and support for pupils are good. There are good procedures in place for safeguarding, child protection and ensuring safety in school. Pupils say they are well cared for and that they feel safe from bullying. They are happy to approach staff to discuss any problem they may have. Younger pupils appreciate the support of the School 'Owls' who help them in the playground. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included in all that the school offers and consequently they make satisfactory progress. Staff treat the pupils with respect and this results in a significant level of trust between the adults and pupils. There are good links with the local secondary school which ensures the transfer between schools is smooth for pupils.

The academic support pupils are given is satisfactory. Teachers know pupils well but assessment information is not always collected and used consistently well to help all pupils achieve higher standards. Not all pupils are sufficiently aware of their personal targets or given sufficient guidance on what they should do to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since her appointment, the headteacher has provided good leadership. She has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has prioritised the most essential improvements. She provides clear direction and a strategic vision for the school. The school improvement plan provides an effective basis for improving provision within subjects. The headteacher has introduced a more systematic approach to tracking pupils' progress, but as this is in the very early stages, the impact of this on outcomes for pupils is limited. Some subject leaders evaluate the provision in their subjects and are beginning to use assessment data effectively to monitor standards. However, there is too much variation in their practice and some are very new to their role. Nevertheless, they are very enthusiastic about introducing new ideas and sharing these with other staff. The opportunities for staff to take part in professional development have increased and this has led to new ideas being introduced into the school. Some of these have been effectively implemented and are consistent throughout the school, for example, the use of learning objectives to guide learning in lessons. However, some initiatives have not been implemented consistently in every class and consequently this has impeded the progress of some pupils. Governance is satisfactory. The governors know the school well and provide both support and challenge. They have some involvement in the daily work of the school and check the school's

progress through visits and reports. The governors appreciate opportunities for training and attend regularly. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is satisfactory and 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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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	3

Personal development and well-being

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

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	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

14 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Forest Hall Primary School, North Tyneside, NE12 9BA

As you know, Mr Potter, Mrs Charlton, Mrs Harber Stuart and I visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. We enjoyed our time with you and thank you for being so polite, friendly and helpful. Please thank your parents for returning the questionnaires and tell them we took all their views into account. I am writing to let you know what we found out about your school.

We think your school is providing you with a satisfactory education overall and some things are good. We were pleased to see how well you care for one another and how most pupils behave well in school. Some pupils take their responsibilities very seriously and support other pupils well as members of the School Council, as 'Big Friends' and also as school 'Owls'. We know that Ms Parker is a good headteacher who knows exactly what needs to be done in your school to help you all learn better. She is highly committed to ensuring that you all improve the standard of your work, particularly in reading and writing and has lots of ideas to help you to do so. Other leaders and managers in the school, including governors, are also keen to help you improve. Children in Nursery and Reception are receiving a good education and there are many good opportunities to learn both indoors and outdoors, which is enabling them to make good progress.

We have asked Ms Parker and all the teachers to do a few things which will help to make your school even better. We have asked them to check regularly on lessons to make sure you are all learning as much as you can in all subjects. Ms Parker will need the help of the teachers who are responsible for different subjects to do this too and they will also be looking at your work and teacher's planning. We have asked for every teacher to check you all know what you need to do to improve your work and to make sure they keep a close check on how much progress you are all making. We have also asked them to help you to improve your writing.

You can help by making sure you come to school everyday, as you miss out on important work if you are absent from lessons, for example, when you go on holiday in term time. You can also help by trying hard to improve your writing.

Thank you so much for helping us with the inspection. Good luck in the future.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the Inspection team)