

Hudson Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108772
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	309796
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Andrew Bennett

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	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Henry
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Field
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Villiers Street South Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR1 2AH
Telephone number	0191 5537675
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school which draws the majority of its pupils from one of the most economically disadvantaged areas within the local authority (LA). Almost half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, three times the national average, and a third of the pupils do not have English as their first language. Most of these arrive at the school unable to speak English. Half of the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, a very high proportion compared with national figures, although the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is average. Many more pupils than is usual in most schools arrive or leave during the year. Since the previous inspection, a major capital project has enabled the refurbishment of the entire school. A community area and Children's Centre have opened and the school is used as a base for local policing. The school is part of a learning network with six other schools in the LA.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Hudson Road is a satisfactory and improving school with many good features. The staff face numerous challenges but are determined to enhance the life chances of pupils and ensure that all achieve as well as they can. Standards in most subjects are very low but teachers are keenly aware of what should be better. Results in reading and writing have recovered from a dip in 2006, and the quality of the pupils' writing is a skill that teachers are committed to making better. Standards in mathematics are a relative strength of the school. A recent decline in science results has been analysed carefully and plans have been made to boost the subject. The school has set very challenging targets for the next two years; it is confident of meeting them because assessment systems are thorough and robust. Given that a large proportion of children start the school with exceptionally limited skills, both social and academic, most make at least satisfactory progress by the end of Year 6. This comes about through teaching that responds to the pupils' needs, good personal development and care, and effective links with outside agencies.

Teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. Staff often use a range of interesting resources, such as interactive whiteboards, and different approaches, including group work, so that pupils are actively involved in their lessons. Nevertheless, in some lessons learning could be more exciting and insufficient use is made of adult helpers to encourage more pupils to think and talk about their work. Staff generally maintain an appropriate balance between supporting the emotional and social needs of pupils and challenging them to gain the knowledge, skills and understanding that will prepare them for future learning. As one parent commented, 'my child enjoys coming to school because she knows she will learn in a caring environment'. The curriculum meets the pupils' needs adequately but staff are looking at ways to make it better through links between subjects that will consistently engage the pupils' interest as well as reinforce basic skills.

The range of additional support for parents, carers and children, including those who have little or no English, is a notable feature of the school's provision. Encouraging parents and carers to learn alongside their children has successfully raised expectations, understanding and self-esteem across the school community. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Despite occasional tensions, they know how they are expected to work and play together and have a growing appreciation of different cultures. The vast majority are happy in the school and feel safe there. Through activities such as the school council, educational visits and more active teaching approaches, pupils are beginning to develop greater independence and a growing sense of responsibility, although many still lack confidence as learners. The school cares well for its pupils and guides them sensitively but faces an uphill struggle in encouraging healthy lifestyles that are not always reinforced at home. Communication with parents is frequent and effective; as one commented, 'the office door is always open and teachers are approachable and welcoming'.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is an energetic and visible leader whose drive and enthusiasm rubs off on the whole school community. While senior leaders are fully aware of the deprivation experienced by many pupils, they do not seek to make it an excuse for poor results and have put into practice effective plans for raising standards. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good; although academic standards are not yet high enough, pupils have made significant gains in social and emotional development. Governors are committed to making the school better and have an impressive understanding of its strengths

and weaknesses. The school has good capacity to improve further. The large number of parents who completed the inspection questionnaire were unanimous in praising the school, many making comments such as 'it gets better and better with each term'. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Nursery with very low skills for their age. Over half are referred for speech and language therapy and many are immature in other ways, for example in self-help and independence. By the end of the Foundation Stage, most have not yet reached the level typical for five-year-olds, although they make satisfactory progress in learning. The majority make good progress in their emotional and social development, which is promoted well by adults. There is a satisfactory balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities. Good relationships with parents thrive in an open, friendly atmosphere.

Staff work well together and the Foundation Stage manager encourages them to benefit from training opportunities. The quality of group teaching is good and all adults consistently promote language skills. The effective use of support assistants, some of whom are bilingual, helps meet the needs of children, particularly those whose first language is not English. The curriculum is satisfactory and the school has made a good start in considering new guidance. Some creative play opportunities lack clear purpose and quality resources. The school recognises the need to encourage greater creativity, curiosity and imagination in outdoor play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of good teaching so as to raise pupils' standards, especially in literacy and science.
- Develop opportunities for creativity and independence throughout the curriculum.

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. Children make satisfactory progress, from a very low starting point, throughout the Foundation Stage and this is built on steadily as pupils move through the school. Standards are very low throughout the school but are improving. For pupils without learning difficulties and/or disabilities, standards are close to national averages at the end of Year 6. In 2007, test results at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics were better than in 2006. Test results at the end of Year 6 showed a substantial improvement in writing, and smaller increases for reading and mathematics. In recent years, standards in mathematics have been consistently higher than in English. Science results have fallen significantly in the past two years.

The school analyses data rigorously and is aware of pockets of underachievement that must be tackled. Most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English, now make at least satisfactory progress given that their starting-points are often very low compared with what is typical for this age. Many make good

progress in mathematics. Notable gains in social and emotional skills boost many pupils' achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils move about the school safely, are courteous and have good attitudes to learning. They cooperate willingly with each other and adults. They are clear about how they should behave in school and understand what happens if they do not follow the rules. They experience at first-hand what it is like to live in multicultural Britain and are genuinely tolerant and understanding. Engaging, fun-filled daily assemblies reinforce this message. Pupils appreciate what they learn about healthy living and the dangers of misusing drugs and alcohol even if they do not always make the best choices of food. Attendance has improved significantly; it is still below the national average but this is largely due to extended term-time holidays taken by families. The democratically elected school council gives pupils the opportunity to have a say in the running of their school, for example in planning new outdoor facilities and in responding to charity appeals. From a very low starting point, steady progress in the skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) helps prepare pupils for their future education. There are opportunities for older pupils to experience business enterprise in links with a local secondary school and good arrangements to support pupils in preparing to move to secondary schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good aspects. Warm relationships between staff and pupils ensure that most lessons run smoothly and productively. Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning because they know this is expected. Grouping pupils for literacy and numeracy allows teachers to devise work that builds carefully on previous learning. Lessons are planned effectively and most take sympathetic account of the wide variety of needs in many classes, including those pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. Bilingual support staff make a significant contribution to these pupils' developing confidence in using English. Other support staff offer satisfactory and sometimes good help to particular pupils, but are not always sufficiently involved when the class works together. Too much time is spent as a whole group at the start of some lessons, when over-long introductions by teachers lose pupils' interest. In the best lessons, teachers encourage pupils to be active and independent learners, for example in group work or investigations, but this does not happen enough to accelerate learning sufficiently, given that many pupils have a lot of ground to make up. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory and sometimes good progress towards their targets. Assessment and marking are used satisfactorily; pupils are helped to understand what they have done well, and how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets current requirements. It contributes especially well to pupils' personal development, particularly through developing the pupils' social and emotional

learning. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are central to the timetable in the drive to raise standards further and equip pupils with skills needed for their future education and working lives. The school is considering how to improve the curriculum, especially through links between subjects and fresh ways of involving pupils more actively in their own learning.

There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, including facilities for pupils to work at school at the end of the day. The curriculum is enriched by visits and visitors that broaden many pupils' otherwise limited experience of what lies beyond their immediate surroundings.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school shows great commitment to pupils in responding successfully to the social and emotional problems that many face. Care and support for the pupils' personal development has some outstanding features, notably the nurture for pupils with severe learning or emotional and behavioural difficulties. Sensitive use is made of specialist outside agencies where necessary. Throughout the school, staff create a protective and welcoming environment in which pupils say that they feel very safe, and where there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. Pupils were adamant that the best feature of the school is 'the teachers – they're brilliant!' Academic support and guidance are satisfactory with some good features. Thorough assessment and tracking systems now allow senior staff to keep a close watch on pupils' progress and set them challenging but appropriate targets. Although it is too soon to judge the long-term effect on raising standards, improvement can already be seen. There are excellent procedures to promote good attendance. All required safeguarding and health and safety procedures are fully in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher sets the tone for the school, celebrating what is good but showing an unrelenting determination to improve weaker aspects of provision. No-one is in any doubt that she aims for a school in which everyone feels valued and where high achievement is the norm. She is supported enthusiastically in this quest by senior colleagues. They have a detailed, honest view of where the school is successful and where it could be better, although modestly under-rating their own impact. Their approach to school improvement is impressively consistent; all planning documents are cross-referenced and focused on raising standards as the central purpose of the school. Challenging targets have been set for the next two years which, if met, would rank the school among the best-performing of those in similar circumstances. Rigorous systems for checking the pupils' progress underpin senior leaders' confidence that these targets can be reached. There are good systems for checking the quality of teaching. Staff receive clear advice to help them improve lessons. Middle leaders are developing a greater understanding of their role, although some lack experience in strategic planning. Governance is good. The chair of governors has a passionate commitment to meeting the needs of the pupils and the broader community; governors hold the school to account where necessary while gratefully recognising its successes.

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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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?	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

8 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hudson Road Primary School, Sunderland, SR1 2AH

Thank you very much for helping us when we inspected your school. You had lots to say and we were really pleased you were so proud of the school and everyone who works there. When I asked some of you what is the best thing about the school, you all agreed it is 'the teachers – they're brilliant!' which was lovely to hear.

We think there are lots of good things about your school, such as:

- the way that teachers and other adults help you to behave well and get on with each other
- the care you are given if you have any problems or difficulties
- lessons where you enjoy talking together and finding out things for yourselves
- the way your staff wants the very best for each of you.

There are two ways we think Hudson Road School can get even better. These are:

- by helping you to improve your English, maths and science
- by giving you more chances to think for yourselves and use your imagination and own ideas in your work.

Your parents told us that they like what the school does for you. It was good to talk to some of them who come to the school to meet each other and join in learning themselves. It was good to see so many different people enjoying being together.

All who work in your school want it to be the very best so that when you move on you are confident and happy young people! We are sure that Hudson Road School will get better and better if you carry on working and helping the way you do now.

We wish you every happiness and great success.

With best wishes

Andrew Bennett

Lead Inspector, on behalf of the inspection team