

Woodham Burn Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109302
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	309954
Inspection dates	5–6 December 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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	301
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bede Feechan
Headteacher	Mrs Riannon Rowe
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Humphrey Close Newton Aycliffe County Durham DL5 4EX
Telephone number	01325 300 230
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school opened in September 2006 following the amalgamation of previously separate, but adjacent, infant and junior schools. Extensive building and remodelling work on the site has been almost completed in one building, but continuing disruption to daily routines is anticipated for the rest of the school year while the other building is updated. This is a larger than average sized school that draws the majority of its pupils from the immediate area, which has high levels of social and economic deprivation. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is almost twice the national figure. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and few have a first language that is not English. Almost one third of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is about half as many again as the national figure; the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is similarly high compared with the national picture. The headteacher was newly appointed to the amalgamated school, as was the deputy headteacher, but this latter post is currently vacant following the holder's promotion to headship.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for all its pupils. There are many good aspects to its work and it has the potential to become better. Since it opened, there have been significant improvements in how the pupils are helped to learn and make progress. Behaviour is managed well so that classrooms are settled and businesslike. New procedures for assessment enable teachers to gain a better idea of the pupils' capabilities and so encourage pupils to do their best, although this development is at an early stage. Classes have been reorganised so that pupils with similar needs are taught together. The new groupings allow for an appropriate emphasis on developing the pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Considerable thought has also gone into making use of the local area and its facilities to interest the pupils in the world about them and to make their lessons more active and enjoyable. The success of these changes shows that senior leaders have a good understanding of the pupils' needs and that they have good capacity to continue to improve the school.

By the time they reach their final year, pupils achieve results in English, mathematics and science that are in line with nationally expected standards. This means that they have made satisfactory and, in some cases, good progress, as many begin with significant weaknesses in speaking, reading, writing and using number. The progress they make comes about as a result of teaching throughout the school that is generally satisfactory and occasionally good or outstanding. Some teaching is rather dull. Nevertheless, although pupils in these lessons do not get very excited about their work, their attitudes to learning remain good and they do not fall behind. Teachers have improved their understanding of individual pupils' needs, but their use of assessment is not effective enough in supporting all pupils. For example, those who should achieve the highest results and some of those who have specific learning difficulties are not achieving as well as they might.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy coming to school. The rate of attendance is average. Pupils feel safe in the school and are given plenty of opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles through exercise and learning about sensible choices in what to eat and drink. They are generous in collecting for charities and take part in other community activities. The school cares well for its pupils and has put considerable effort into helping them develop social confidence and a greater awareness of the wider world in preparation for their move on to secondary school and beyond. One parent commented that 'the school and its staff are amazing. They cater for every child's needs on a personal basis.'

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear sense of direction, has debated this vision thoroughly with governors and communicates it effectively within and beyond the school. Other senior leaders are being given more responsibility and authority so that there is increasing understanding among all staff of where the school is successful and of areas in which it might do better, and how. This awareness underpins the clear potential within the school for its continuing improvement. Although the school opened with a considerable budget deficit, this has been managed efficiently without detriment to the pupils' education. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory with some good features. Children enter the Reception class with a range of abilities and many have skills lower than those typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning, good progress in their personal and mathematical development, and reach standards close to those expected for children of their age. Teaching is satisfactory with some strengths, in particular the caring relationships and support given to children in helping them develop good personal and social skills. This has a positive effect on children's learning and promotes confidence and the feeling of being valued. Activities, often linked to a theme or story, are generally interesting and motivate the children. However, too many tasks are directed by adults with few opportunities for children to choose or develop their own ideas. This restricts their scope for independent or shared activity or to follow their own lines of enquiry and investigation. The outside area is underused and underdeveloped, so that it does not contribute enough to children's enjoyment and progress in some skills. Classrooms are welcoming, bright and well equipped. Induction arrangements are satisfactory. Assessment procedures are sound; adults share their day-to-day observations of children's achievements so that teachers can modify planning to meet individual needs. Parents receive information about their children's progress and, occasionally, about how they can support them. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good. The team leader knows the strengths of the provision and is keen to develop areas identified as needing improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the planning for outdoor activities and the scope for children to exercise choice and develop independence in the Foundation Stage.
- Share existing best practice to increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better.
- Ensure that the assessment of pupils' work is consistently accurate and that their progress is tracked effectively.

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 and standards are broadly average. Many children enter the school without the benefit of nursery education and many exhibit social and/or behavioural difficulties. Despite their low starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. Building on this, pupils make generally sound progress in Years 1 and 2, although standards in 2007 at the end of Year 2 were below average, notably in reading. The majority of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved well in mathematics, but less well in reading and writing. By the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils have made at least satisfactory progress, including those for whom English is a second language. Some achieve well. In the national tests taken in 2007, pupils achieved broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. The small number of pupils with a statement of special educational need achieved less well than might have been expected, especially in mathematics and science. Other pupils with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved results above the national average

for similar pupils in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects tested at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2007, boys achieved rather better results than girls compared with national figures. Notable gains in social confidence and emotional development boost many pupils' achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Their spiritual and cultural development is promoted effectively through occasional themed weeks, for example, when studying the Hindu religion. As a result, pupils talk with good levels of understanding about other faiths, celebrations and traditions. Moral education is good. Behaviour was a concern for the school but is now good. The great majority of pupils know right from wrong. Isolated instances of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with effectively. Pupils like the new rewards and sanctions linked to behaviour. They are welcoming to visitors and are happy to talk about their work and school in general.

Pupils mostly enjoy lessons; attendance is close to the national average. The school is aware that the actions of some families lower the overall level of attendance and appropriate strategies are used to tackle this problem. Pupils develop safe lifestyles through activities such as cycling proficiency and working with the school nurse on topics including personal relationships. They talk readily about guidance they have received from visitors such as members of the emergency services and how they understand about potential dangers out of school. All pupils, including the youngest children in the Foundation Stage, appreciate the benefits of exercise and its effects. They make a positive contribution to the community, such as through generous collections for charities and carol singing in the town. They are made aware of their own place in society, for example, through a visit by the local MP. The school council meets regularly and is gradually taking responsibility for decisions about spending small sums of money. As preparation for their future lives, pupils are given a sound grounding in literacy and numeracy and, in the best lessons, develop sound skills in working both independently and with others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall, and is good or outstanding in some classes. Where teaching is most effective, lessons are well planned and managed, and start with clear learning objectives that mostly match work well to the learning needs of individual pupils. There is a good range of interesting activities. Personal targets are set for pupils and these are often prominently displayed in the classroom. Older pupils in particular are made increasingly aware by the teachers' references to progress of what they should do to achieve their personal targets. Where lessons are satisfactory, teachers tend not to let the pupils do enough work for themselves. This results in a lack of pace and too little challenge, especially for the more able learners. The use of assessment information is developing successfully throughout the school. Where work is marked helpfully, it tells the pupils what they have done well and what they need to do to improve further. However, further development is needed to ensure a consistent quality in the assessment of pupils' work in different classes and groups, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Relationships between pupils and adults are good and produce a purposeful and productive atmosphere in most classes. Pupils behave well and concentrate on their work nearly

all the time. Teaching assistants know the pupils' needs, are well-briefed by teachers and help small groups of learners sensibly to gain confidence and improve their standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, based on national guidelines. It is beginning to help pupils learn more effectively by taking the local environment and facilities as its starting-point and is enriched by many visits and visitors that broaden the pupils' understanding of the wider world in which they live. Teachers' planning is beginning to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of different pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are fully included in all activities. The use of key skills is planned carefully so that pupils have constant opportunities to improve their literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. The development of pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) is less well established as a result of the disruption to teaching spaces and services caused by ongoing building works. Nevertheless, classes make effective use of computers and other equipment where they can.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Every pupil knows that he or she matters to adults and is well cared for. This good level of care derives from teachers' detailed and sympathetic understanding of pupils' personal circumstances and the support often given to parents and carers as well as to their children. Arrangements for child protection, safeguarding, health and safety, as well as risk assessment all meet national guidelines. Pupils feel very safe in the school. They trust staff and have confidence in them to deal with anything they are worried about.

A new system to check children's learning and set more challenging individual targets started this year. The staff have made good progress in sharing judgements about how well pupils are achieving, although the system is not yet used equally effectively, or consistently, throughout the school. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. They are treated with appropriate sympathy and dignity in lessons and are helped to learn as well as other pupils. Good links with outside agencies provide support for pupils where appropriate. Arrangements for starting school and for moving on to secondary school are effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is determined to improve the school and has an accurate, detailed understanding of where it is performing well and of aspects that should be better. Although the school currently has no deputy headteacher, the headteacher is ably assisted by other senior members of staff who lead key stage teams and coordinate the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Challenging targets for results in national tests have been set for the next two years, although systems for checking the pupils' progress towards these are in the early stages of development and are not yet used consistently well in all classes. The headteacher has an accurate view of the quality of teaching, based on her own visits to lessons. She is unwavering in her commitment to ensuring that pupils experience

lively and meaningful lessons throughout the school, for example, through continuing to review the relevance of the curriculum.

Governance is good. Significant changes to the school, such as the new curriculum and recent reorganisation of classes, are thoroughly discussed by the headteacher and governors. When convinced of the need for change, the governors offer their full support, but are prepared to challenge the headteacher in arriving at appropriate decisions. Relatively few parental questionnaires were returned to inspectors; a small number were critical of some areas of which the school is already aware but most were positive about what the school provides. A typical comment made by the parent of a child new to the school was that she 'has settled well and the school has a good balance of encouraging educational achievement as well as ensuring the children are well cared for'.

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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	NA
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	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	3
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	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

7 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodham Burn Community Primary School, Durham,

DL5 4EX

Thank you all for the help you gave us when we inspected your school recently. It was good to hear what you had to say. We were pleased that you like Woodham Burn and we agree with you that there are many good things about it.

Lots of the lessons are good fun, especially when you can work together in groups, explain your own ideas to the class and when you do exercise. Most of you enjoy knowing how well you are doing in your work. Your achievement at present is satisfactory. You feel safe and happy in the school and you are well behaved, in and outside of lessons. The new rewards for good behaviour are very popular but, if anyone is sometimes a bit naughty, you all agree that the warning system works well too.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. To make your school even better:

- we think that children in the Reception class should be able to work and play outside more and be allowed to choose more things to do by themselves
- we would like teachers to share their best ideas so that there is even more really good teaching and exciting lessons
- we would like teachers to make sure that they are all giving you the same kind of advice when they mark your work and check that you are doing as well as you could.

You already make Woodham Burn a happy school by the way you work hard and behave sensibly, especially while the building work is going on. It can improve even more if you make the most of any new ideas and opportunities that you are offered.

We wish you every happiness in the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Bennett

(Lead Inspector, on behalf of Jane Beckett and Geoff Watson)