

Newcomen Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111638
Local Authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	310649
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Hillary Porter
Headteacher	Mrs Barbara Linthwaite
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Trent Road Redcar TS10 1NL
Telephone number	01642 484318
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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 primary school, with nursery provision, in an area of significant social deprivation. Nearly double the national average of pupils is eligible for free school meals and the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high. Almost all pupils are from White British families and there are very few pupils whose home language is not English. Pupil mobility is high. Many pupils join and leave the school at times other than the beginning and end of the school year. The school provides extended services for the community and has national healthy schools status, the ECO bronze award and Activemark. Currently, pupils in Key Stage 2 are accommodated in temporary classrooms because the school is being demolished in stages and a new one built on the same site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. Children start from a very low base and make good progress in all aspects of their education, particularly in their personal development which is outstanding. The pupils are polite, friendly and helpful. Their behaviour is exemplary. They are justly proud of their school and enjoy their education. They have a secure understanding of the importance of trying to live a healthy lifestyle and rigorously take part in plenty of exercise and enjoy the healthy food available in school. There is little or no bullying and all pupils feel safe in school. Many pupils play an important part in the life of the school by being peer mentors, playground leaders, buddies, prefects, running the Eco committee and serving on the school council. Their strengths in social and academic skills prepare them well for the future.

The great majority of parents are pleased with the education their children receive and one typical comment was, 'I have nothing but praise for this school and its dedicated staff'. Standards are broadly average in English and mathematics by the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 2 but are below in science. A recent focus on writing across the school has been successful in improving standards in English but there are still too few opportunities for pupils to write at length in other subjects. The current science curriculum provides too few opportunities for pupils to investigate and work independently. Nevertheless, most pupils achieve well during their time in the school and pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties achieve particularly well because of the excellent support they receive. Teaching and learning are good. Classroom practice is consistently good but marking is inconsistent and not enough attention is paid to correcting pupils' spelling. The curriculum is good across the school and excellent in the Foundation Stage. There is an emphasis on creativity and making learning enjoyable and exciting. In addition, the curriculum is regularly revised to meet both individual pupil needs and to draw on local interest and experience. Pastoral care is excellent. The school provides an oasis of calm for its most vulnerable pupils. This is a harmonious community notable for the good humour and kindness of everyone in school. Safeguarding procedures are in place. Guidance and support for learning are good and the school has a very accurate picture of how much progress is made by the pupils.

Leadership and management are good. In the last four years the headteacher has moved the school forward significantly. She has a vision of a school that challenges individual pupils to develop their learning skills and understanding of the wider world. This is shared by the highly committed staff team. All leaders and managers have a firm grasp of priorities and how to measure the school's progress. Self-evaluation is good and takes notice of comments from parents, pupils and staff. The school has recently passed a full health and safety audit and achieved the standards mark for financial management. The school is running efficiently, despite the disruption caused by the major building programme. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Foundation stage unit is outstanding. When most of the children start in the Nursery, their skills and knowledge are very low, especially in personal and communication skills. Children make very good progress in all areas of learning because they enter a warm, stimulating and exciting environment, well organised to promote their future development and

independence. By the end of the Reception year a few meet the level expected for their age but most remain below despite the exceptional staff teamwork, planning and exciting activities. Children have appropriate access to a challenging learning environment outdoors. Teaching and learning are excellent. Staff are particularly skilful, when intervening in children's play, promoting language and understanding. They observe well and adapt quickly to changing needs and interests. In this way, children are well supported and they all grow in confidence. Parents are enthusiastic about the Foundation Stage unit. They appreciate regular information about progress and learn how to support and extend their child's development. Leadership and management are excellent and there have been many improvements since the last inspection. These include better balance between teacher-led and child-chosen activities, equal access to facilities, consistency of approach across the unit and greater flexibility to address the specific needs of every child.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for the more able, by creating more opportunities for writing at length.
- Make marking more consistent and give all pupils a clearer idea of what they need to do to improve.
- Improving investigation work in science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average and achievement is good. At the end of Reception, overall standards have risen but are still below expectations for their age, particularly in language. Standards overall at Key Stage 1 have been well below average for several years, although in 2007 pupils reached the national average in mathematics. Few pupils reached the higher levels and none did so in writing. Standards at Key Stage 2 have slowly risen and are now broadly in line with national averages in English and mathematics but remain below in science. Currently, pupils are on track to achieve the challenging targets set for them. The school focus on improving English, especially writing, is showing good indications of success. However, more needs to be done to build up the pupils' basic literacy skills so that they can use them to good effect in other subjects. Weak spelling continues to spoil the work even of the most able pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities reach and exceed expected standards because of the excellent guidance and support they receive. Overall, pupils make good progress during their time in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Behaviour is excellent and the pupils exercise commendable self-discipline both in and out of the classroom. They are proud of their school and view it as an oasis of peace in a challenging world. They have excellent attitudes to learning and generally enjoy lessons. Pupils have a thorough knowledge of keeping themselves safe, healthy and fit. They know what foods and drinks promote physical well-being and choose healthy options from the salad bar at lunchtime and during the day. Many take advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular physical activities on offer as well as eagerly participating in the 'wake and shake' sessions each morning. The school was on target to raise

attendance to above average this year but many pupils were ill in January and February so currently attendance remains average.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is also outstanding. They know the difference between right and wrong and are sensitive to the needs of others. They are aware that they live in a community and country of many different faiths and cultures and a wide variety of visits and visitors develop their understanding of community and culture. Pupils' opinions are valued. For example, they were involved in the appointment of the present deputy headteacher. Pupils are frequently involved in fund-raising activities and charitable works which provide further opportunities for involvement with the local community. Year 1 pupils have recently held a sponsored pedal push to raise funds for the NSPCC. Their excellent personal skills mean that pupils are well prepared for life as young adults.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and in some lessons outstanding. This enables the majority of pupils to achieve well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give clear explanations. In many classes good questioning encourages pupils to respond orally developing their speaking and listening skills, currently a whole school focus. Planning of lessons is detailed and usually matches the work to the ability of the pupils. In some classes, however, pupils are not set sufficiently challenging work which restricts their progress. Lessons are often interesting and lead to enthusiastic responses from the pupils. This was evident in a Year 5 mathematics lesson in which pupils learnt tables with actions. Pupils work cooperatively and often support each other and the outstanding behaviour in lessons reflects the obvious enjoyment of their learning. Teaching assistants are well prepared. They make a very positive contribution to the learning of the pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good use is made of resources such as interactive whiteboards and computers. There is inconsistent use of marking and assessment to inform pupils how to make progress. Nevertheless, in the best lessons assessment is used well to help teachers plan the next steps in learning. Pupils are given clear guidance on strategies for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. All subjects follow government guidelines and pupils receive a suitably broad curriculum which is enriched with French, specialist music teaching and a wide range of sports. The curriculum is regularly revised to meet both individual pupil needs and also to use local interest and experience. Recently, the school has focused on the development of literacy skills, especially the teaching of speaking and listening. As a result, pupils are more confident and standards are rising. However, opportunities for extended pieces of writing in other subjects are sometimes missed. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to enhance pupils learning, despite the current constraints of the building programme. Pupils regularly experience exciting visits or workshops. They were keen to talk about a visit to a Christian wedding and were able to compare it to weddings in other cultures. During the inspection, pupils worked enthusiastically with a poet and produced some high quality and entertaining work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good with outstanding features. Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are firmly in place. This is a caring school which works hard to provide a 'safe haven' for its most vulnerable pupils. Its focus on social development has resulted in confident pupils who trust each other and the adults in school. Pastoral care is outstanding. The school is able to meet individual pupils' needs through its target-setting and tracking system. The school has worked hard to include the parents in their children's education. Parents say they appreciate being able to study alongside their children after school. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. They are very well supported by a range of specialist support adults. Talented pupils are well supported with additional 'master classes' in the arts.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The head teacher has skilfully created both leadership and subject teams. They are building up their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through good monitoring practices and respond to challenge with vigour. As a result, recent improvements in writing and robust pupil targets have begun to have a positive effect on accelerating progress from the very low starting point in the Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 2 where it is good. Changes to the organisation of the Foundation Stage have led to outstanding provision. The development of ICT as both a subject area and means of communication is now a strength of the school. All other areas from the last inspection have been dealt with well. Partnerships with a wide range of other schools and providers are strong and promote pupils' personal well-being as well as their academic progress. A really successful link has provided learning experiences for children during the holidays. Governors are very supportive. They know the school well and play an important role in helping to shape its direction and hold it to account for its performance. The school provides good 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?	2
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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	2
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

9 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newcomen Primary School, Redcar and Cleveland, TS10 1NL

Thank you for making the inspection team feel so welcome when we inspected your school this week. We enjoyed spending time with you and listening to your views and opinions. We really liked your singing in assembly and enjoyed watching your wake and shake sessions in the morning. You told us that you like school and we can see why you are proud of your school.

These are the things we thought were good about your school:

- the way teachers look after you, and how you all care for each other in a kind and friendly manner
- your excellent behaviour in and out of lessons
- your teachers make lessons interesting and enjoyable so that you make good progress
- you have many visitors in school and go out on visits yourselves so that learning is even more interesting; we could see how much you enjoyed the visit of the poet on Wednesday
- you are all learning how to be fit and healthy
- all the adults in school work hard to make sure you do the best that you can
- children in the Nursery and Reception classes learn really well; we loved the gasps of delight when the giant rang up the Nursery class this week!

To help you to do even better we have suggested that you practise writing longer pieces of work and make sure your spelling is correct. We also think you would improve your work in science if you did more investigations. You can play your part by always doing your best and attending school regularly.

We wish you good luck and success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw

Lead inspector