

Cotherstone Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114020
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311450
Inspection date	7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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	66
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Doctor Rob Carter
Headteacher	Mrs Rebecca Jellis
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2004
School address	Cotherstone Barnard Castle County Durham DL12 9QB
Telephone number	01833 650491
Fax number	01833650491

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	7 February 2008
Inspection number	311450

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the progress that pupils make
- the extent of pupils' personal development and well-being
- the use of assessment, teachers' marking and targets for learning to support pupils' learning.

Evidence was gathered from the school's performance data and other school documentation, observations of teaching and learning, the work produced by pupils, parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, staff and the chair of governors.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school serves families in Teesdale, County Durham. The locality is very rural with an above average socio-economic character. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes for much of the time: Reception to Year 2, Years 3 and 4, Years 5 and 6. A well below average proportion of pupils take free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average and a small number have a statement of special educational need. All pupils have a White British heritage and none is learning English as an additional language. The school has the Investing in Children, the International and the Activemark Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Cotherstone provides a good education for its pupils. Some aspects of its work are outstanding, and the school is improving successfully in others. Pupils' achievement is good and their personal development and well-being are excellent. The very effective leadership of the recently appointed headteacher and the way that all staff effectively promote a caring ethos and a clear philosophy that every child does matter, are amongst the many reasons why this school is very successful. Parents who responded positively to the inspection questionnaire are fully justified in their total confidence in the school. The overwhelming majority of parents hold the school in very high regard and comment positively on progress, management and communication with them. One parent's statement sums up their views well, 'Our children thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school and partake in very varied after school activities. Access to the teaching staff and head is readily and easily available. ... We are extremely happy with the education they are receiving and feel the school works hard in all aspects to ensure a very round and inspiring curriculum.'

Good and often very effective teaching results in pupils achieving well. Pupils begin Year 1 with abilities broadly typical for their age overall. A significant proportion have better levels of development in personal and social development and mathematical development. Pupils across the school are successfully helped to sustain good progress. In recent years they have reached significantly high standards compared to the national average in the Year 2 assessments. This year, writing standards were lower than for reading and were highest in mathematics, but general conclusions about standards cannot be made as the group size was very small.

Overall results in national tests for Year 6 pupils have been significantly above the national average over the past five years, including the most recent results for 2007. Pupils' performance in science and English was particularly good and better than in mathematics. Pupils currently in Years 3 to 6 are making good progress overall, particularly in reading and mathematics, and in some year groups their progress is outstanding. The school has properly identified writing as a key area for further attention. Its work has already started to improve the quality of writing and Year 4 pupils especially are making good progress.

The school is very successful in helping pupils develop a very positive outlook on life, a desire to care for others and good levels of maturity. It offers an exceptionally wide range of activities that are reflected in the many displays of pupils' work, which contribute to their outstanding spiritual, social and cultural development. Assemblies and links with the local church and schools in Europe and Australia, contribute markedly to their spiritual and cultural development. Pupils know the importance of good health and fitness and most choose a healthy meal at lunchtime. They are full of gusto in physical activities and many take part in voluntary sports. They act safely and sensibly around the school, including outdoor playtimes, and they say that there is little bullying. Pupils behave impeccably, and are keen to contribute in lessons where they work with avid enthusiasm. These are vital factors in the good and sometimes outstanding progress many make. Pupils speak confidently and politely, and show care and respect for each other. Well above average attendance, the way pupils talk willingly about their friendships and, with good humour, about school life, all reflect how much they enjoy school. Pupils help enhance school life and the local community, for example, through their school council and partnership with Friends of the School, and through their charitable work. Their very well developed social and basic skills, and close working arrangements with local secondary schools and the business community, all ensure Year 6 pupils are well-prepared for the future.

Good achievement and outstanding personal development and well-being result from an effective combination of good teaching and support, as well as a very rich variety of experience and opportunities throughout the curriculum. Teachers and teaching assistants plan lessons very diligently and provide activities that interest, challenge and support pupils. Pupils know what is expected of them and work earnestly and industriously. Teachers, support staff and helpers skilfully work together and ensure everyone, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, all take a full part in lessons and achieve well. Teachers' marking congratulates pupils on their accomplishments and is usually helpful to pupils. Occasionally it does not correct spelling or give detailed pointers to improvement. The school strikes a good balance of work in English, mathematics and science with other subjects. New computing facilities really enhance learning in many areas. Displays and photographic records include some excellent work and reflect the contribution of visits and visitors and the wide range of out-of-school activities. These, and excellent partnerships with parents, the church and external agencies all play an outstanding part in extending and widening pupils' learning and their personal development.

The school values each child as an individual and follows their progress carefully. A successful new process of rigorous assessments and thorough reviews of progress are coupled with teachers' personal knowledge of each child to identify where help is needed. Pupils at risk of falling behind receive specific help to overcome their particular difficulties. This relatively new process is working well, as school records of progress show. Clear procedures safeguard the welfare of pupils and meet current government requirements. They ensure that child protection, health and safety, and risk assessments for activities are secure and up-to-date.

The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and governors who work harmoniously together to make best use of their resources. As a result of very diligent monitoring they have a clear and broadly accurate perspective of the school's work, although they judge the quality of the curriculum and pupils' personal development and well-being modestly. The school is justifiably proud of recently improved arrangements to promote pupils' achievement. Important improvements have been put into effect this year through a well thought out development plan. The school follows a thorough process to set ambitious targets based upon pupils' prior attainments and backgrounds. A few individuals do not have a precise enough target to aim for in English and mathematics to ensure they are fully challenged. On the basis of successful learning now seen in school and the high quality of care and support, the school is on course to reach its ambitious goals for higher standards. The school has successfully addressed issues from the last inspection. Given its recent track record of promoting good progress, and the governors' and headteacher's determination to raise achievement and standards even higher, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children join the Reception class with a range of skills which, for many, are below those typical for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. Parents of new starters are delighted with the way their children settle very quickly and enjoy school. Children are thoroughly involved in activities and follow classroom routines. Children thrive and many make outstanding progress because of the very effective provision in this year, the last of the Foundation Stage. By the end of Reception their skills and abilities are broadly typical for their age overall, and in communication, language and literacy development. A significant proportion of children

exceed expectations for their age in personal and social development and in mathematical development. They are very well placed to move on to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate the work started on improving standards in writing.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	1
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	2
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	1
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	1

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?	1
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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
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

8 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cotherstone Primary School, Durham, DL12 9QB

I really enjoyed my visit to your school this week. Thank you for helping me when I came into your assembly and classrooms to see you at work. I did enjoy talking with those of you whom I met. You were very well behaved, exceptionally polite and really helpful. It was great to see how confident you are, how much you enjoy coming to school and taking part in all the different activities, how you value the friendships you make, and how much you contribute to school life. I know the headteacher and all the staff are rightly very proud of you.

Yours is a good school. It is very warm and welcoming and well organised. I know that you feel safe and happy because all the adults in the school look after you really well. Your lessons are good and some are very good. I was impressed with the way you work very hard and like to take part in lessons. Last year those of you in the Reception class and in Year 2 did exceptionally well, especially with mathematics. Many of you are presently making good progress especially in reading and mathematics and I have asked the school to help you to improve your writing even more.

You have very many opportunities at Cotherstone Primary School to learn about life and these should stand you in good stead for the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector