

Beamish Primary School and Nursery Unit

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 114021 |
| Local Authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 311451 |
| Inspection dates | 29–30 April 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Denis Goodchild |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 54 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Catherine Irwin |
| Headteacher | Mr Ivor Williams |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 November 2004 |
| School address | Co-operative Villas Beamish Stanley DH9 0QN |
| Telephone number | 0191 370 0181 |
| Fax number | 0191 370 0181 |

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|--------------------------|------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average school. It serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the start of the school year is well above average. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Pending discussions on reorganisation, the school was led by the teaching deputy headteacher as acting headteacher for five terms. The school became part of a Federation in September 2007 and is managed by the existing headteacher of the partner primary school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Beamish is a satisfactory and improving school with some good features. It provides satisfactory value for money.

Parents appreciate the friendly caring nature of the school. They agree that their children are happy in school and are safe and well cared for. The school places a high priority on pupils' personal, social and emotional development. This and the very good relationships mean that behaviour is excellent in lessons and pupils develop good attitudes to learning. They willingly take on extra responsibilities and contribute to the wider community by taking part in fundraising events for charities. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school but attendance is below the national average and this slows the progress of some pupils.

Standards in the 2007 national tests were below average, and particularly so in Key Stage 2. Standards in English were well below the national average. Standards in pupils' work in the current Year 2 are average; in the current Year 6 they are close to average.'

Teaching is satisfactory overall and promotes satisfactory achievement for pupils. Pupils' progress is good where they are provided with clear guidelines on what and how they will learn and what they need to do to succeed in the lessons. Activities in lessons promote enjoyment but are not always accurately matched to the needs of all the pupils. This slows progress, particularly of the more able. Progress in writing is improving because of effective school action to improve teaching in this area. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of all the pupils. It is enriched and extended by a good range of activities. It is most effective where action has been taken to improve pupils' writing skills and resources for information and communication technology (ICT).

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher and federation with a local school has provided stability after a period of uncertainty. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher and there is a shared determination to raise standards. Recent initiatives in improving the teaching of writing, marking which clearly identifies the next steps and the setting of individual targets for improvement have helped to raise standards. Management evaluates the school performance but is not sufficiently rigorous in evaluating teaching and analysing assessment data in order to track pupils' progress and accelerate their learning. The chair of governors has a good understanding of the school's performance though the new governing body's role has still to be fully developed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. Children start the Nursery with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. They are often well below in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. Children make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and good progress in Reception. By the end of the Foundation Stage they have developed skills and knowledge close to those typical for their age.

A wide range of indoor activities, covering all areas of learning, provides opportunities for children to exercise choice and work independently. Outdoor provision has been much improved since the last inspection and is used well to develop children's skills and knowledge. Play based activities offer opportunities for children to develop their social, communication and number

skills and encourage a lively interest in the world about them. Staff carefully check children's progress and keep parents well informed. Good relationships mean children are well cared for and happy. Staff are new to the Nursery and have made a good start in successfully providing a bright welcoming environment much appreciated by parents. However, they are not complacent and actively seek advice on how to further improve provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attendance.
- Raise standards in Key Stage 2.
- Monitor teaching across the school and share good practice seen in the school and federation.
- Use the information the school has on pupils to more rigorously check progress and to accurately meet the needs of pupils, particularly the more able.

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

Overall standards are below average but pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Results in the 2007 teacher assessments for Year 2 in reading and mathematics were slightly below average. Year 2 writing results were average and sustained the improvement seen in 2006. Current overall standards in Year 2 are average. The 2007 results for Year 6 in mathematics and science were below average and well below average in English. This group had a significantly high proportion of pupils with difficulties in language and communication. Inspection evidence and school data presents an improving picture. The recent focus on raising standards, particularly in writing, is having a positive effect and pupils are making better progress in all year groups. Standards in English, mathematics and science, in the current Year 6, are close to the national average. The school has set challenging targets that it is confident it will achieve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the support of teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good, as is their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Many visits, visitors and events provide an insight into their own and other cultures. Relationships throughout the school are very good and behaviour is excellent. The school day is calm and orderly and pupils cooperate well during lessons. Pupils say there is no bullying and that 'because we are a small school we get on quite well'. Pupils feel confident that if they have any concerns help is at hand because 'teachers are nice and reassure us.' They make a good contribution to the school community and those on the school council are proud of their work, which has improved playground facilities and furniture in the school library. The school council described their role as 'listeners' communicating the needs and concerns of their fellow pupils. Pupils are sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. Pupils appreciate the wide range of physical activities on offer and develop a good understanding of what is needed to live healthy and safe lives. They enjoy coming to school, although attendance is below the national average. As a result of their satisfactory academic progress and good personal development, pupils are sufficiently well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good elements but also some inconsistencies. Very good relationships result in pupils wanting to please, so they respond positively, behave well and lessons are productive. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are well prepared with activities which generally interest the pupils. In a good Year 5–6 science lesson on forces, learning intentions were explained, activities well demonstrated and expectations made clear. All pupils made good progress because they knew what they were going to learn and they were keen to participate and share their thinking with one another. However, in some lessons it was not made clear what pupils were going to learn and teachers did not use what they know about pupils to accurately match activities to their needs, particularly to those of the more able pupils. This slows progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of the effective sensitive, additional support of teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. Personal, social and health education including emotional development is well promoted, enhancing pupils' ability to stay healthy. All junior age children have weekly swimming lessons and visiting coaches and links with a local sports college provide access to a good range of sporting activities. The curriculum is further enriched by visits, visitors and events which add enjoyment to learning. Recent developments in the curriculum have improved provision in some areas. ICT resources have been improved since the last inspection. Computers are used well as a writing and research tool, for example in a Year 5–6 investigation on volcanoes. ICT is not so well used to enhance learning in numeracy and scientific skills particularly in data handling. Effective action has been taken to improve writing and this is having a positive effect on standards in all years. The school recognises the need to maximise the writing opportunities across the curriculum to build on this success. In mathematics and science the improved focus on problem-solving and investigative skills promotes enjoyment of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Very good relationships underpin the school's caring attitudes. The school values all its pupils and provides a safe, welcoming environment. Pupils are well supervised. The school council compiled the school rules and presented a power point presentation on bullying. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are rigorous and risk assessments and health and safety checks are fully in place. Parents agree that their children are safe and well cared for in school. Effective links with external agencies ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive the support they need. Pupils usually receive good academic guidance on how to improve. They have clear targets in writing and mathematics and very good marking in writing is helping to raise standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following a period of uncertainty the appointment of a new headteacher and the federated status of the school have provided new opportunities for development. The new headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, has instilled a determination to raise standards and provided a clear direction to school improvement. The school places a high priority on the personal development and care of pupils and enjoys the full confidence of parents and carers.

Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work and performance are satisfactory. Whilst planning and pupils' work are checked by management there is no effective monitoring of teaching so that best practice can be identified and shared across the school. Managers check pupils' performance and track their progress. This has enabled the school to set challenging whole school targets. However, the analysis of information is not rigorous in identifying when and where the school needs to intervene in order to accelerate individual progress. Nevertheless, evaluation of the schools' performance has identified appropriate areas for development.

Governance is satisfactory. Roles and responsibilities are in place for the new governing body though their role in contributing to school improvement and acting as a critical friend is underdeveloped. The chair of governors has a good understanding of the school's performance and is very supportive of management. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The impact of measures to successfully raise standards in writing and the sense of optimism in staff indicate a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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 | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| 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? | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| 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 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

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|--|---|
| 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

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| 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

1 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beamish Primary School and Nursery Unit, Durham, DH9 0QN

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. A special thanks to the school council who gave me lots of information about your school and described all the activities, visits and visitors which make learning enjoyable. I was particularly impressed with the work you do for charities which helps to make your school an important part of the community.

You say that you are happy and enjoy coming to school. But, a number of you do not come to school as often as you should. I have therefore asked the school to think of more ways to improve attendance. Your parents agree with you that you are safe and well cared for in school. Your behaviour is excellent. You work hard in lessons and cooperate with one another very well.

You make satisfactory progress in lessons. Some of you make good progress, especially when teachers make sure you understand what and how you are going to learn during the lesson. I have asked the school to try to make sure that all the lessons in the school are good all the time. Also, although activities in lessons are interesting I have asked the school to make sure that they are really challenging so that you improve much more quickly and attain higher standards especially in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Your school has already taken steps which have improved your writing skills and teachers give you very good advice on how to get even better. Well done all of you. I know the teachers will be working hard to make your satisfactory school an even better school. With your help I am sure they will succeed.

Best wishes for the future.

Denis Goodchild

Lead inspector