

Annfield Plain Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114024
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311453
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Carole Snee

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Michelle Hodgson
Headteacher	Miss Lynne Tullett
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Front Street Annfield Plain Stanley County Durham DH9 7ST
Telephone number	01207 234531
Fax number	01207 234531

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school. The number of pupils receiving free school meals is in line with the national average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. None speak English as a second language. The percentage of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average.

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 where parents are supportive; one commented, 'we have been very impressed with the school from day 1.' They particularly appreciate the good level of support and care their children receive from all of the staff. The pupils enjoy coming to school, and love the chance to take part in the range of after school activities on offer. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are polite and well behaved both in and out of school. They are rightly proud of the work they do through the school council, and the responsibilities they have, such as 'young leaders' and library monitors. They develop a good knowledge and understanding of the choices needed to stay safe, fit and healthy and are well prepared for moving on to their next stage of education.

Teaching overall is good and pupils achieve well. The latest national test results [2007] show that almost all pupils attained the standard expected for children of their age in English, mathematics and science, while a significant number attained even more highly. Overall, standards are significantly above average and have risen steadily since the last inspection. The best teaching is in Year 6, where activities are fun and imaginative, and there is a good level of challenge for all groups of pupils. In some lessons, however, the pace is slower and the activities do not capture the pupils' interest and keep them motivated to learn. The everyday curriculum is good in meeting pupils' academic needs which results in good achievement and high standards in English, mathematics and science. When imaginative learning experiences are provided, for example when pupils participated in an Indian Feast after a classmate had been to India, pupils are inspired and learning increases. At times, however, the curriculum is rather predictable and lacks imagination and this means that pupils don't do quite as well as they could in all subjects. Pupils' learning is successfully extended through a good programme of enrichment. Visits to places such as Beamish and the Lake District, and visitors such as artists in residence extend pupils' experiences. Good links with other organisations, such as Newcastle Vipers, Durham County Cricket Club and local secondary schools support and enrich learning further.

The school is well led and managed. There is a strong team ethos and all members of the small staff take pride in how well they know their pupils and their families – many of the parents also attended the school. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the school. There is a tendency though, for them to be over reliant on the school's own evaluations of the school rather than making their own. The school has improved since the last inspection. The tightly structured curriculum and improvements in target setting and monitoring have contributed to the rising trend in the standards and indicate the school's good capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide a more consistently stimulating and enriched curriculum.
- Ensure that teaching is consistently good across the school.
- Improve the governing body's capacity to judge the school's performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils come into the school with standards at or just above the national average. By the time they leave the school, they are attaining significantly above the national

average in English, mathematics and science. In 2007, almost all pupils attained the nationally expected level for their age, and many attained much better, particularly in science. For the past three years, standards overall have been significantly above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early, and effective support is given to them. This has enabled them to make good progress and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils enjoy school, especially all the extra activities including the sports in which they do well competitively. Most sustain good concentration in lessons, although they are not all disciplined about their pace of work. Behaviour is good even when lessons are not particularly stimulating. Play is mostly harmonious in the yard. Pupils know that any occasional misbehaviour is well dealt with. Attendance has been average over time but has improved a little this year.

Pupils are physically active in and out of school and have a good awareness that exercise is good for them. Their need for a healthy diet is clearly understood, but harder for them to adopt. Interesting activities, such as an Indian feast and Japanese artwork, give pupils a good awareness of culture and other communities. Some art is striking, like the vivid African tableaux by Year 6 pupils but music is less well developed because there is no specialist teacher on the staff. The school council is active in solving important issues, not simply in terms of better toilets, but also resolving behavioural concerns. Good community links include a joint project with other schools about the area's mining heritage, and a litter campaign. Overall, pupils are prepared well for life ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall, especially in Year 6, because lessons are carefully planned and effectively matched to pupils' different levels of ability. Good use is made of regular assessments, leading to appropriate learning targets for the pupils. Progress towards these targets is regularly checked, and pupils find this very useful. Marking helps the pupils to know what they have done well, and what they have to do to improve. Pupils are also given the opportunity to assess each other's work, so that they are focused on what they have to learn. Pupils with additional learning needs are well supported by carefully targeted provision and staff who know the needs of the children very well. In the best lessons, such as a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the pace is quick, activities are short, snappy and stimulating, and the use of assessment to challenge all groups is exemplary. In some lessons, however, the slow pace and lack of sparkle in delivery means that pupils are not always fully involved with their learning; they are well behaved but not always well motivated.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good. A strong, formal emphasis on literacy, numeracy and ICT has been influential in raising standards. At times, staff enrich the curriculum very well through stimulating topics, such as snails in Year 3; these engage pupils' imagination and evoke a sense of awe, as well as improving skills in, for example, writing. The recent focus on developing art

has clearly had an impact, as seen from the many high quality displays throughout the school. Not enough learning, though, routinely includes such interesting activities, and so pupils do not do quite as well as they could in applying their learning.

All pupils have an equally effective curriculum, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who benefit from specialised support. The school has done well to improve the range and quality of the resources for information and communication technology (ICT); these have contributed to better standards. A very good range of clubs after school includes many sports and activities like cheerleading and filmmaking. Professional coaching from outside organisations, like Durham County Cricket Club, adds considerable value to the activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of its pupils. Formal systems for safeguarding pupils are in place. The school is careful to assess risks in and out of school, and to foster pupils' well-being. It is especially successful with vulnerable pupils, working closely with external agencies to improve social skills or behavioural issues so that all pupils are able to achieve well. Everyday safety is very well addressed through such activities as cycling proficiency. Pupils and parents appreciate the individual care by the staff, although pupils do not always share any personal problems with staff.

The systematic and regular tracking of pupils' progress shows staff clearly which pupils need help or those who are perhaps underachieving, so that help can be provided. Pupils agree their own targets with teachers especially to improve English and mathematics. Targets are usually precise, relevant and regularly reviewed. Pupils say they these really help them to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well managed. The headteacher knows the school very well and is passionate about ensuring that the pupils receive a good education. The quality of the school's self evaluation is good. The senior leadership has put systems into place to track the achievement of different groups of pupils, and also to ensure that pupils work is analysed in order to identify appropriate learning targets. As a result, standards have risen steadily since the last inspection. The headteacher is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and other subject leaders are beginning to develop their roles. Subjects are monitored regularly, through looking at books and planning, although opportunities for teachers to develop their skills through working alongside their colleagues in the classroom are limited.

The governing body works closely with the headteacher, is very supportive of the school and ensures that it meets statutory requirements. Governors are, however, not involved enough in making their own judgements about the school. Good financial management ensures that the school is well resourced and suitably staffed.

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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 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?	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	2
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	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

13 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Annfield Plain Junior School, Durham, DH9 7ST

The inspectors very much enjoyed meeting you recently. Thank you for making us feel welcome, and talking to us about all the things you were proud of in your school, such as your school council and the clubs you attended.

You have a good school. You are well behaved; this helps you to listen to your teachers so that you know what to do. Your teachers work hard to make sure you are taught the right things, although sometimes we think they could make your lessons even more interesting for you.

Your teachers know you very well, and because of that, they know how best to help you learn. You are all doing very well at your school – many of you are doing better than other children of the same age, so well done!

We have identified ways to make your school even better by:

- thinking of ways to make your lessons more interesting and fun – you can help by talking to teachers about how you like to learn
- making sure that teachers help each other to be even better at teaching you
- helping the governors of your school to get to know more about you and how well you are doing in school – you can help here by talking to them when they visit your school, or maybe inviting them to your school council.

We know that you and your parents are very happy with your school, and rightly so. Keep on working hard and your school will keep on getting better and better!

Best wishes

Carole Snee

Lead inspector