

Consett Infant School and Nursery Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114052
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311465
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Carole Snee

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jeff Hall
Headteacher	Mrs Lucy Wallace
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2004
School address	Teasdale Street Consett County Durham DH8 6AF
Telephone number	01207 504464
Fax number	01207 504464

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school takes children from its own Nursery but also from a variety of other settings. This means that attainment on entry can be variable but the majority of children come in below the national expectations for children of their age. Most pupils come from a White British background. The percentage of children receiving free school meals is approximately half the national average and that of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below 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 good school is friendly and welcoming. Parents overwhelmingly feel that staff are very approachable and have the best interests of the children at heart. The headteacher provides a clear vision for improvement and staff and governors are committed to seeking the very best for the pupils. Pupils' personal development and well being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Their behaviour is good because there are clear rules and many awards for positive attitudes and actions. The 'Kids' Council' has made a significant contribution to the quality of the school meals and its members are rightly proud of their influence. Pupils feel safe and secure and talk enthusiastically about how much they enjoy school. Parents comment on how much their children's self confidence has increased since starting school.

The pupils make good progress overall. From starting points below those expected for their age, they attain standards significantly above the national average by the time they leave the school. Achievement is therefore good. Teachers know the pupils very well and because of this they are able to plan lessons and activities which help them to make good progress. The school is good at quickly identifying those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as more able and talented pupils. This ensures they are well supported in their learning and also make good progress. The recently introduced tracking system has made a significant contribution to raising standards because teachers now have a clearer idea of what pupils can do and how they can improve. Assessments are not yet used consistently, however, to inform planning and provision, and there is not always a clear enough focus on what the pupils need to learn, rather than what activity they need to do. There are times when the more able pupils are insufficiently challenged but current assessments for the end of Key Stage 1 show that progress for these children has significantly improved.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher and all the staff share a commitment to improvement in all areas. The school has successfully addressed all of the issues from the previous inspection. Clear strategies for further improvement have been identified and standards are rising. Pupils' progress is now monitored regularly and subject leaders have identified the main strengths and weaknesses in their subjects through monitoring planning and children's work. They do not yet, however, contribute effectively to raising standards through observing their colleagues lessons and identifying improvements in the teaching as well as the learning. Supportive and knowledgeable governors know the school well and offer good levels of challenge. The capacity of the school to improve even further is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a very good start in the Nursery. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and are welcome to stay if their child has initial difficulties in settling in. Activities are imaginative and the children clearly enjoy their time in school. They make good progress because their teacher and the support staff have a good understanding of how very young children learn. Work is planned to support children's personal development as well as their academic progress. Strong commitment to outdoor learning gives children many opportunities for developing their independence through play based activities. Transition into the Reception class is smooth because time is taken for all staff to work closely together to ensure that children's individual needs are well met. Children continue to progress in the

Reception classes where staff are also increasingly using the outdoor area to support learning. Planning for adult led activities generally identifies what children will learn. However, learning objectives are not always as clear in the areas where children choose their own activities and this restricts opportunities for independent learning. The Foundation Stage leader has a good overall picture of provision and standards because the staff do their long term planning together. Opportunities to monitor on a day to day basis are limited.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment information more effectively to plan activities focused on the learning needs of individual children.
- Extend the role of the subject leaders to observe and evaluate learning and teaching and identify ways to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Children join the Nursery with the majority working below the national expectations for children of their age. Their standards when starting Year 1 are around those expected. By the end of Year 2 most are working above the national average although writing is a little weaker than other subjects. Progress in both key stages and overall is good. Over time, the percentage of Year 2 pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in all subjects has been below the national average. The school has taken effective action to raise achievement, for example in boys' writing and girls' mathematics. Good tracking enables the teachers to set appropriately challenging targets for the pupils and monitor their progress effectively. Current preliminary assessments indicate that standards have risen and more pupils are reaching the higher levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development gives them a strong foundation for their personal development. They gain confidence in expressing their own ideas and feelings and show respect for those of others. 'Kids' Council' members take their responsibilities seriously and explain that everyone in the school 'cares for each other'. Pupils' behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school and they enthusiastically express their enjoyment of school. They say they feel safe and secure, knowing that staff will always deal with the rare behaviour problem. Attendance levels have sometimes been affected by childhood illnesses but are around the national average. Pupils relish wider cultural experiences and improve their understanding of others' lives through growing links with schools in other countries. They speak with understanding about the life of Buddha and proudly show the shrine that has been set up. Many enthusiastically demonstrate the Zulu songs and dances they have learned. Pupils have excellent knowledge of how to eat healthily, reflecting the school's Healthy Schools Award. They proudly describe how they helped to choose improved menus for school dinners and appreciate the many opportunities for sports and exercise. Pupils' positive attitudes and developing skills serve them well for future learning, although some opportunities to promote their independence are missed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

All pupils' needs are met through a good range of activities, both in and outside lessons. The support for pupils' personal and social development is particularly strong, ensuring pupils gain maturity and confidence. Although there is an emphasis on developing pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills, the school promotes effective learning across the full curriculum. Developments have been accurately targeted at identified areas of relative weakness and are leading to improvements. For example, new strategies to promote writing are raising standards and teachers are now identifying ways to develop pupils' writing in other subjects. Where pupils are falling behind in any aspects of their learning, the school has effective strategies to help them catch up. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make good progress. Pupils' experiences are enhanced and enlivened by an effective range of visitors such as Zulu dancers and musicians. The good range of after school clubs includes sporting opportunities that are particularly appreciated by pupils and parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Very good personal care ensures pupils are happy, enjoy their learning and are well prepared for their future education. Many parents justifiably point to the care of their children as a strength of the school. There are thorough and established measures to ensure pupils' health and safety and all the necessary child protection and safeguarding requirements are in place. Good relationships with parents and outside agencies contribute significantly to pupils' support. Staff know individual pupils extremely well and cater effectively for their needs. Support for vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is well targeted and effective. Recently introduced systems for tracking pupils' academic progress are improving the accuracy of teachers' knowledge of pupils. Reviews and evaluations within these systems are contributing to better progress and raising standards. However, teachers do not consistently use all the available information to plan tasks that are closely matched to the needs of pupils of different ability levels.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well managed and there is a clear and shared vision for improvement. The headteacher works sensitively to utilise the skills of the teachers and introduce new improvement strategies. Comprehensive tracking and very good personal knowledge of pupils means the school's self evaluation is accurate and standards are rising. Planning identifies areas for improvement clearly but is less precise about what outcomes from improvements are intended. Subject and other leaders manage their roles well and are successfully taking increasing responsibilities. However, their opportunities to monitor teaching directly have been limited, restricting their overview of provision and standards. Parents feel strongly that the school's

'open door' policy enables them to have any concerns dealt with quickly and effectively. The governors are very supportive and have a good knowledge of the school. This is because the headteacher keeps them well informed through comprehensive reports, but also because some governors are frequent visitors to the school and so can see and monitor how policies are put into practice.

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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	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	1
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	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	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

16 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Consett Infant School and Nursery Unit, Durham, DH8 6AF

We really enjoyed our days in your school recently. Thank you for making us welcome, chatting to us and showing us your work. You told us that your teachers are nice, that you care for each other and that you learn a lot. We saw all of these things on our visit and judge that yours is a good school.

Your teachers know you very well and are good at helping you to learn new things. They have worked hard to make sure that you have fun when you learn. As a result, many of you are learning more quickly than other children of your age, so well done! We were really sorry we missed the Zulu dancers because you told us how fantastic they were.

There are times, however, when some of you could be helped to learn even faster.

- We have asked your teachers to look at your work more closely, so they can tell you exactly how to improve it. You will need to listen very carefully to what they say.
- We have also asked them to help each other to make sure the work they plan for you helps each of you to do your very best.

We know that you and your parents are very happy with your school. Don't forget to work hard and continue to look after each other.

Best wishes

Carole Snee and Tony Painter

Inspectors