

# Hamsterley Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 114053       |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Durham       |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 311466       |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 6 March 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Lynne Read   |

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

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|---|--|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4-11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 26   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr Stephen Lee   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs Sandra Lawrence  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 1 June 2004  |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Hamsterley<br>Bishop Auckland<br>County Durham<br>DL13 3QF |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01388 488279   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 0  |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This small school serves pupils from the village and surrounding rural areas. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds; the proportion entitled to free school meals is below average. There is a below average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All pupils come from White British backgrounds. A significant percentage of pupils either leave or transfer to the school part way through their education. Pupils are taught in two mixed age classes with a separate area for the Reception children.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Hamsterley Primary is a good school and has some outstanding features. It provides good value for money. The strengths identified at the previous inspection have been maintained and improvements have been made to the breadth of the curriculum and pupils' personal development. The school has good capacity to improve further. Parents are pleased with the provision and say their children are happy and learning well. Links with other schools provide valuable benefits for the pupils, especially for competitive sport and in providing opportunities to socialise with a wider circle of friends.

At the start of Year 1, pupils' development is broadly typical for their age group. Pupils make good progress and standards for Year 6 are above average. In the 2007 national tests achievement and standards were better in English than in mathematics. Observations and school records show that this is not the case now and pupils are currently making good progress. Improvement in mathematics has been brought about by an increased emphasis on calculation work. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. The school provides a strong caring ethos which ensures that pupils feel secure. As a result, there is a calm, productive, family atmosphere and pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school.

Teaching is good. There is good expertise among teachers and teaching assistants so they are able to provide very good support to meet all needs within the mixed age classes. Lessons challenge pupils' thinking and problem solving skills, providing good opportunities for them to be active, enthusiastic learners. In the very small teaching groups, learning is often personalised and this helps to boost progress. Very good systems for marking, advising pupils how to improve and in involving pupils in evaluating their own work help to boost progress in writing. Similar systems are not so well established in mathematics.

The curriculum is outstanding. A strong emphasis on personal education ensures that pupils have a good understanding of the principles of healthy living and promotes harmonious relationships. The school holds an impressive range of curriculum awards that recognise, for example, the good work done in promoting creative talents, as well as physical and sporting skills. There are a variety of opportunities for pupils to experience responsibility and share in decision making. This prepares them exceptionally well for their future lives, whilst also contributing to the strong community spirit in school. An interesting range of additional activities enhances learning extremely effectively and helps to broaden pupils' horizons.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides good leadership and is constantly seeking to improve the range and quality of provision for the pupils. Attention to safety issues, including checking on the suitability of staff and helpers, is thorough. The headteacher keeps a close eye on the school's performance, continually identifying areas for improvement and developing the relevant plans for action. However, due to the complexity of the systems for recording pupils' progress and attainment, the process of monitoring can be time consuming for staff and very difficult for governors.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning in the Reception group are good. The new classroom produces a stimulating and inviting learning environment. Although children have no separate, purpose built outdoor space the school grounds are used well. For example, during the inspection,

children were searching for worm habitats in the garden and had plenty of opportunities for physical exercise. Children have exceptionally good adult support and are encouraged to explore their world and become independent. They have constant opportunities to pose questions and follow their own lines of enquiry. They also learn a great deal from working in groups alongside Key Stage 1 pupils, especially in communication and collaborative skills.

Children's attainment at entry to Reception varies widely between individuals and from year-to-year but, on balance, is typical of that usually seen for this age group. Children make good progress in all areas of learning. By the end of the Reception year, the majority have met expectations fully, with strengths in personal and social development. Many have also developed further than usual in early reading and writing.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the marking, guidance on how to improve and pupils' opportunities to be involved in evaluating their own work in mathematics.
- Modify systems for recording pupils' progress so that staff and governors are able to carry out their monitoring roles more effectively.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average by Year 6 and pupils achieve well. Pupils' development on entry to Year 1 is just above that typical for the age group. Standards at Year 2 are above average with all pupils attaining the expected level in 2007. Progress in reading and writing is especially strong.

During Key Stage 2 several pupils leave or enter the school and a significant proportion of the new arrivals have experienced some loss of continuity in their previous learning. Nevertheless, all make good progress. The school's challenging targets for English were met in 2007 and a good number of pupils achieved the higher level in the subject. In mathematics, the school was very close to meeting its target. Pupils continue to make good progress and standards are above average with most of the present Year 6 pupils already working above the nationally expected level in English, mathematics and science. Standards in reading and writing continue to be a major strength and progress in mathematics has improved recently. Pupils who have learning difficulties make equally good progress to their peers and have very good self-esteem. Great care is taken to ensure that lessons cater for all interests and dispositions. Consequently, boys and girls progress at an equal rate and the more able pupils have extra challenges to stretch them.

### **Personal development and well-being**

#### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are outstanding. They are effectively encouraged through the caring, family ethos. Attendance is above average. Across school, pupils enjoy learning, have a strong work ethic and are very confident in their own abilities. They say there is no bullying in school and they feel very secure. Behaviour is exemplary. One pupil, expressing a typical view, commented, 'everyone has good manners here'. Older pupils demonstrate excellent self-discipline and maturity. The Healthy Schools Award recognises the excellent work done in learning about healthy living and pupils are proud of the environmental work they do in pursuit of the Eco

Schools award. Through the curriculum and the 'philosophy for children' sessions, pupils develop a very good awareness of, and respect for, beliefs and cultures that are different from their own.

Pupils play an important part in decision making through their elected school council. They engage eagerly in fund-raising projects and are keen to take responsibility for jobs around school. Older ones are well trained for their roles as playtime 'buddies' or prefects. These factors, together with good standards, prepare pupils extremely well for future education and citizenship.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching groups are small and well trained teaching assistants help to ensure that the needs of pupils in the mixed age classes are met fully. Teachers constantly assess pupils' progress and independent tasks are often planned on a personalised basis. This helps to accelerate progress for the more able and ensures good provision for pupils who need extra help.

Teachers make the purpose of lessons clear so pupils know what is expected of them. Introductions to lessons usually have a fast pace and include a good amount of problem-solving and collaborative work. These factors enthuse and motivate pupils. The marking of pupils' writing is excellent and advises pupils very clearly about what they have done well and where they could improve. Pupils are also taught how to critically evaluate their own writing which promotes good skills of independent learning. Similar systems are less well established in mathematics.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The excellent curriculum includes French lessons and injects excitement and enjoyment into learning. The rich programmes for literacy and creative development are major strengths of the school. They result in high standards of reading and writing, excellent artwork and very good opportunities for pupils to develop drama and musical skills. Pupils who have gifts or talents have extra challenges, for example, through 'mind mapping' sessions. Opportunities for pupils to consolidate basic skills when studying other subjects are extensive. Independent tasks include plentiful opportunities for personal study and for pupils to follow their own lines of enquiry.

Staff in this small school go to great lengths to provide additional experiences for pupils. Excellent enrichment for learning is provided through themed events such as a day devoted to creativity, and participation in performances and enterprise projects. Visits and visitors also extend learning extremely well.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good overall and pupils receive excellent pastoral support. This aspect of the school's work is commended by parents and is very effective in promoting self-esteem among pupils. Meticulous attention is given to care, health and safety issues. Measures for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Very good transition arrangements are

in place and older pupils say they are confident about their move to secondary school. The recent introduction of a Parent Support Adviser is helping to strengthen links between home and school and is a good asset for parents who live in isolated locations.

Pupils are being involved in checking on their academic progress and have a checklist of learning goals for the year so they know what they are expected to learn. In Key Stage 2, pupils have helpful and individual guidance on how to improve their English work. Guidance for mathematics is less detailed and therefore less effective.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher provides good leadership and is responsible for maintaining the excellent caring ethos in school. The learning environment is very stimulating, administration is highly effective and standards of maintenance and cleanliness are high. These factors reflect a shared sense of pride among all at the school.

Assessment and tracking records are used to keep a close eye on achievement and standards as well as the school's provision. Action is taken where needed and this leads to a continuous, good cycle of improvement. However, each key stage has a different system for recording progress which makes the checking of performance more complicated and time consuming than it need be. There is scope to streamline the systems in order to make monitoring more efficient, provide clear information for the governors and enable better delegation of responsibilities to the subject coordinators.

Governors understand the strengths of the school well and have the pupils' interests firmly at heart. They work hard to promote the profile of the school within the community and are keen to be more involved in monitoring standards and achievement. Governance is good and all statutory requirements are met.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

### 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 <sup>1</sup> 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  | 2 |
| 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 |

<sup>1</sup> 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**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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

7 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hamsterley Primary School, Durham. DL13 3QF

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. I thoroughly enjoyed my day and I appreciated all the help you gave me and the interesting conversations we had. In return, I would like to tell you what I discovered.

Hamsterley is a good school and you make good progress. Some of the things that impressed me most were your excellent behaviour, your willingness to work hard, and the very good writing and art work that you produce. You get on very well together and take excellent care of each other. You are a credit to your families and your school; well done! Your council members ensure that your views and opinions are taken into consideration. I think the new suggestion box is a good way of ensuring that you all have your say.

The school is a safe and happy place. You told me that there is no bullying and it is good to know that you are mature enough to 'sort out squabbles fairly'. Your comments included 'we have stacks of good books', and 'everyone enjoys school and we work hard'. I agree wholeheartedly. It is also good to see how you appreciate the fresh air and countryside around school and are actively involved in protecting the environment.

You are keen to learn and take very good notice of the advice that your teachers give you in order to improve your writing. I think it would be good if you had similar, detailed guidance in mathematics. I have also asked that the staff think about how they might change the way they check on the progress you are making, so that is easier and takes less time. I hope you continue to relish the challenges that your teachers present to you and enjoy continued success at the school.

Thank you once again for the interesting conversations I had and for letting me share your day. There is a great deal about your school of which you and the staff should be very proud. Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector