

# Hartside Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114057
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	311467
<b>Inspection date</b>	28 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jim Bennetts

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	177
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Ann Turnbull
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Pauline Walker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 September 2004
<b>School address</b>	Hartside Crook County Durham DL15 9NN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01388 766686
<b>Fax number</b>	01388 768450

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- Whether high standards are being maintained despite staffing difficulties.
- Whether there is an appropriate focus on literacy.

Evidence was gathered from: lesson observations; discussions with pupils, some parents, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority; and scrutiny of parents' questionnaires and school documentation including the school's self-evaluation. 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 this report.

## Description of the school

This is an average size primary school in a small town. The great majority of pupils are White British. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds, but more than average are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school has a leadership role in the development of information and communication technology (ICT) in the area. It has strong links with schools in Tanzania through a British Council scheme. The school's qualities have been recognised by 'Artsmark gold' and other accolades.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. Pupils achieve exceptionally well, and the school has managed to maintain this high quality despite enormous recent difficulties with staffing. Pupils develop considerable maturity and commendable social skills. The headteacher has been tireless in her meticulous management of the school and shrewd deployment of staff. This has carried the school triumphantly through a very turbulent time. The great majority of parents recognise the impressive strengths of the school, and appreciate the great efforts being made. However, some feel that they are not kept sufficiently informed about how the school does things. Governors and senior staff are aware that the school needs to foster stronger partnership with parents.

Achievement is outstanding and standards are above average. For the last three years, the progress made by pupils from age 7 to 11 has been in the top 10% nationally; in 2007 it was in the top 2%, and best of all in mathematics. The present Year 6 has already had several teachers this year. Provision has been managed so that teachers play to their strengths. Teaching in Year 5 and Year 6 is invariably outstanding. The track record of high achievement is being sustained; many pupils in Year 6 are already working at the highest level – most can work out VAT on a bill without a calculator. Most pupils starting in Reception have skills and abilities that are lower than those typical for their age, particularly in speech and communication. Very good progress is made in Reception and good progress generally continues through Key Stage 1. Those with learning difficulties and /or disabilities do at least as well as others because of the well focused attention to their needs. Many of those who took national assessments for 7 year olds last summer struggled with reading and writing, and results were lower than usual though most pupils had made reasonable progress from their starting points. These, and others who learn more slowly, continue to be well provided for. The split age classes, necessitated by current lower pupil numbers, are turned to advantage – the diverse needs of all pupils are exceptionally well catered for.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teaching is best in Years 5 and 6. Keenness for learning has already been engaged in the Reception year, where pupils listened with rapt attention to the Big Book story at the end of the day, whilst soothing music was played. By Year 2, able pupils evaluate their own writing and make improvements. In Year 6, an ambitious drama session enabled pupils to appreciate that working out the right words to capture feelings comes through 'living' through the context – in this case, a time of war. By Year 6 pupils have become articulate and are willing to speculate on questions such as: 'Why is it still light after sunset?' Pupils enjoy learning and are exceptionally well prepared for the next stages of education. Only very occasionally is there faltering in the pace of lessons. Marking across the school is painstaking and lets pupils know what they are doing well and how to improve. It informs the excellent recording system that enables staff to make sure that everyone is doing as well as they should. Use of ICT is a major strength in teaching and learning.

Despite the difficulties resulting from many staff leaving or being unwell, all subjects of the curriculum have been provided with high quality to all pupils. This has been achieved through a variety of creative and enterprising arrangements, and at all times with insistence that nothing but the best will do. The plethora of enrichment activities is magnificent, with a wide range of activities, visits and visitors involving sport, the creative arts and the strong Umoja (Together as One) link with Tanzania. The school has been dexterous in seeking national or international funding for such ventures.

Pupils' enjoyment was seen in every lesson, in the playground and in the dining room. Pupils know how to look after themselves – even in Reception, where some nonchalantly and safely jump off low walls in the outdoor area. They are keen to participate in sport and appreciate the work of the coaches, for instance with cricket and football. Packed lunches are remarkably healthy: not a high sugar chocolate bar to be seen. Attendance is good, behaviour is generally excellent (and nothing less is tolerated). Youngsters who might find it hard to fit-in with some groups are everywhere treated with friendliness and consideration by their peers. Pupils say there is no bullying, that they are treated with respect, and get lots of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils pray with sincerity. They aspire to debonair maturity. Cultural appreciation is mzuri sana (very good), as they learn to say in Swahili. Pupils are well looked after. Child protection checks are in place. A few parents are concerned, sometimes unnecessarily, about changes and the way things are done, such as different leaving times for infants and juniors. Partnership with parents to optimise pupils' wellbeing is a matter for further development.

Leadership and management are excellent. The recent staffing difficulties have been attended to with relentless determination to do the best for the children. Some appointments to the senior team have yet to be made or to take effect; and devolved management is yet to bed down. There is rigorous planning, monitoring and accurate self-evaluation. Improvement has been made and sustained since the last inspection, with vigorous capacity for more. Governors are highly diligent, know the school well and give robust support to the headteacher's crusade for excellence. They are aware that links with the community the school serves could be strengthened. This outstanding school gives exceptional value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is good with some outstanding features; the development of language skills and socialisation are particular areas of strength. The Reception teacher and assistants work effectively as a team in the classroom. All activities, whether painting, role play, or feeling the texture of a pineapple, have a strong focus on learning to speak clearly and with confidence, and learning to listen with attention and discernment. This pays great dividends in overall learning and the development of pupils' self-confidence. Work in Reception is well planned with a sensible flow from structured to less structured activities through the day. Assessment of pupils' capabilities is thorough and reliable. It is one of the key strengths in planning for children's development. The two way visits that staff have made between Crook and Tanzania are drawn upon productively to promote discussion, understanding of the world, and skill development – children ride around in a 'safari bus', and draw a pregnant giraffe! The outdoor play area is unusually large, varied and exciting. It is also difficult to supervise. Staff are aware of issues in striking the right balance between close supervision and letting children 'have a go' so that they learn to look after themselves.

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

- Consolidate leadership roles and staffing.
- Foster stronger partnership with parents.

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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?	1
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	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### 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?	1
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>	1
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	1
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

29 February 2008

Dear pupils

Inspection of Hartside Primary School, Durham, DL15 9NN

I really enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you for all your help. I was enormously impressed by how well you are doing, even though there have been a lot of staff changes recently. I think your school is outstanding. You can tell your friends in Tanzania that it is bora-bora.

The progress that pupils have been making over the last few years makes this one of the best schools in the country. Teaching is generally excellent and the older pupils are still doing really well. You know how to look after yourselves and you get on exceptionally well together. The school sees to it that those who need extra help are well looked after, and teachers keep very good track of everyone. As you know, staff have left or have been off sick, but the headteacher has kept changing things round in order to do the best for you. The school is working hard to finalise staffing arrangements.

You enjoy lots of exciting activities. I am delighted that you are learning some Swahili – you never know when you might need it, and it gives you ideas about how people do things in other places. Some of your parents are a bit worried about the way a few things are done in the school – like why teachers keep changing. There is often nothing to worry about. But maybe the school and some of your parents could get together a bit more.

You are really lucky to be at such a good school and your parents should be really happy for you. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely – kwa heri na asante.

Jim Bennetts

Lead inspector