

Byers Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114070
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311472
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Armstrong

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gordon Henderson
Headteacher	Mr William Kirtley
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Wear View Byers Green Spennymoor County Durham DL16 7PN
Telephone number	01388 603483
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school situated in an area of social and economic disadvantage. It serves three villages in a rural area in south west Durham. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than average as is the percentage who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is low. A very small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups; none speak English as an additional language. A small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority. The school took up new accommodation in February 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some strong features in the pupils' personal development and in the good provision in the Foundation Stage. The headteacher and his staff know the pupils very well. This has resulted in a good level of care for vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents are very supportive of the school and speak highly of the welcoming atmosphere where their children are 'happy and enjoy learning'.

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and, by the time they leave Year 6, standards are average. Throughout the school, pupils do not achieve as well as they could in English because there are insufficient opportunities for them to extend their writing skills across the curriculum. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable receive high quality support and achieve well. Teaching is satisfactory. Although there is some good teaching, it does not always take account of individual ability and need, and plan sufficiently challenging work especially for more able pupils. As a result, the progress of these pupils is erratic. Marking is not used consistently across the school resulting in pupils being unsure about how well they are doing and how they might improve.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Relationships are good and, as a result, pupils are well behaved and manage their emotions well. All pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. They make a good contribution to the community through their involvement in fund raising for a range of charities and by participating in the work of the school council. Pupils enjoy school and this is best summed up in the words of one pupil who reported, 'Our school is safe and happy. It is a good place to learn.' The curriculum is satisfactory. The varied range of activities outside lessons is appreciated by the pupils. Visits and visitors, and the effective partnerships which have been developed with some organisations and parents, extend learning and contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of school. Although their writing skills are weaker than they could be, pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of education.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher leads and manages his staff well. As a result, teachers and support staff work effectively together as a team and share the same vision for the future development of the school. Good improvements have been made. These include more effective systems for tracking pupils' progress which have improved some teaching and learning, and have helped to identify pupils requiring additional support to boost their learning. There is still more to do to improve the learning of the most able pupils. Governance is good. Governors are well informed and they support the school well through new initiatives. For example, they have made certain there is a good range of resources to support pupils' learning in information and communication technology (ICT). The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children start school with skills which are below those typical for their age, particularly in their ability to communicate and in their mathematical development. The very good level of care given to children helps them settle quickly so they learn to work and play together in a safe and interesting learning environment. Good assessment

procedures help teachers plan activities which take account of children's prior experiences and learning needs. As a result, teachers provide a good balance of activities led by an adult and those initiated by children, and they keep a close check on how well they are doing. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other vulnerable pupils make good progress because of the effective adult support. By the end of the Foundation Stage most children achieve the goals expected for their age. Effective links with parents ensure they support learning well. Consequently, children make good progress in relation to their low starting points. The Foundation Stage is well led; a clear action plan shows that prompt action is being given to developing the outdoor area in the new accommodation.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers make better use of information about pupils' progress to plan effectively for more able pupils.
- Extend opportunities for writing in all subjects.
- Improve the use of marking across the school so pupils know what they need to do to move on in their learning.

A small proportion of the 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

Standards are average and the achievement of pupils is satisfactory. Standards tend to fluctuate because of the small year groups and the differences between pupils' abilities from year to year. They have been mostly average in recent years in Key Stage 1. In 2007, standards were below average for Year 2 pupils, because of their performance in writing; reading and mathematics were closer to average. In addition, too few pupils achieved the higher levels in reading and writing. The school's data indicate that pupils in the current Year 2 are on course to achieve average standards.

Standards in Year 6 are usually average, as they were in 2007. They dipped a little in English because, although higher attaining pupils performed well in mathematics and science, they did not do as well as expected in writing. Over the past year, the school has had a particular focus on raising achievement in writing and, as a result, standards are rising. More able pupils still do not always achieve as well as they could because teaching does not challenge them sufficiently. Nevertheless, internal assessments indicate the school is likely to meet its performance targets of average standards at the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those from minority ethnic groups and those who are looked after make good progress because of the well-planned targeted support they receive. Although there is some variation in the attainment of boys and girls, there is no discernible pattern.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, they are confident and articulate individuals who show empathy and concern for others. They behave well because relationships are good and they know what is expected of them. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and treat each other with respect. They

say they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in improving levels of attendance. The school promotes healthy lifestyles well. This enables pupils to make informed choices about the food they eat and to take regular exercise. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and they are confident issues such as bullying would not be tolerated in their school. Pupils are a credit to the school and take a pride in their contributions to the community. They act as members of the school council, take responsibility as classroom monitors and participate regularly in fundraising activities. Well developed social skills stand them in good stead for their future, although their literacy and numeracy skills are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some good teaching. Relationships are good and pupils are keen to work hard and do their best. Pupils say they enjoy learning and teachers work conscientiously to engage their interest. For example, in a good Year 6 numeracy lesson, pupils made good progress in their ability to solve multi-step word problems because teaching was lively and expectations were high. Generally lessons are well planned and resources, including computer technology, used well to enrich learning. Teaching assistants are well trained and provide high quality, targeted support. This means pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the increasing number with additional needs are able to play a full part in lessons and achieve well.

Where teaching is less effective, planning does not clearly identify the level of challenge for more able pupils. Where this is the case, the pace of learning is slower and the level of pupils' engagement less secure. Marking is supportive and encouraging. In the best examples, it clearly indicates how pupils can improve their work but this practice is not consistent across the school. As a result, pupils do not always know how to move on to the next step in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets all statutory requirements and provides pupils with a variety of experiences which they enjoy. For example, pupils talked excitedly about how much they enjoy learning French and taking part in the UK Chess Challenge. Personal, social, health and citizenship education contributes positively to their behaviour, and helps them learn to work and play happily together. The school provides a range of visits and visitors. These include visits out of school to Beamish Museum and the Roman settlement at Binchester, as well as specialist sports tuition. The opportunities for learning beyond the classroom are good and pupils are keen to attend the range of sporting and creative activities which are available. The curriculum's main weakness is the lack of opportunities it provides for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects. As a consequence, standards in English are too low.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The good links with outside agencies ensure care and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other vulnerable children are good. Procedures for child protection, risk assessment and health and safety are fully in place. Pupils feel safe and secure because they know an adult will help them if they have a

problem. Induction arrangements are good and this helps pupils new to the school settle in quickly and feel part of the school community. The school has a good partnership with parents and this supports learning well. Guidance is satisfactory. The school regularly tracks pupils' progress but teachers do not always use progress information well enough to plan sufficient challenge for the most able pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides purposeful leadership and this has helped him develop a good team spirit in the school. Consequently, the school has maintained a good focus on raising standards during a period of extensive building developments. For example, improvements have been made in ICT and mathematics, and standards are rising in both subjects. Self-evaluation procedures are comprehensive and provide an accurate picture of what is working and what needs attention. Senior leaders have recently begun to analyse data more closely and set challenging targets for improvement, but information about pupil progress is not used sufficiently well to ensure all pupils achieve their maximum potential. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly and support is given when required. However, teachers need further guidance on how to plan effectively to challenge the most able pupils. The school has good support from governors, who are well informed and act as challenging and critical friends. They know the school well and play a full part in its development. The school has successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. It has good capacity for further improvement.

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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?	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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	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	2
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	3

The quality of provision

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?	3

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?	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	2
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	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

20 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Byers Green Primary School, Durham, DL16 7PN

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your beautiful new school recently. I really enjoyed spending time with you and listening to your views about your school and why you enjoy learning. You told me how much you enjoy the visits and visitors. You also told me how you stay healthy and about the good range of sporting activities you take part in. I think that you behave well and that you are polite and helpful. Many of you help with the running of your school, for example by serving on the school council or by acting as classroom monitors. Well done!

I was very pleased to learn how well you attend school and thought your behaviour in lessons and around school was good. I was very impressed with the work of the school council and the way in which classroom monitors take responsibility for making sure your classrooms are tidy and well-organised. You told me you really like the after school clubs, such as choir, chess and football and I can understand why. Your school works closely with outside groups like the Sports Partnership to make sure there are lots of interesting things for you to do.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory education. You are reaching the standards expected for your age. I found that you made satisfactory progress in your learning but some of you could be challenged further with harder work. Some of you are a little bit unsure of what you need to do to move on in your learning so I have asked the school to improve the way your work is marked. I also think you need more opportunities to develop your writing skills in different subjects. You can help by always doing your best and continuing to involve yourselves fully in the life of the school.

Thank you again for welcoming me to your school. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Armstrong

Lead inspector