

Tudhoe Colliery Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114083
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311476
Inspection date	15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Mawer

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	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ivan Whitfield
Headteacher	Mr Jim Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2005
School address	Front Street Tudhoe Colliery Spennymoor County Durham DL16 6TJ
Telephone number	01388 814399
Fax number	01388 812639

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

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

- the current standards and progress being made, particularly by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are more able
- the effectiveness of strategies being used by the school to improve writing
- how well multicultural awareness is being developed
- whether pupils are given enough opportunities in lessons to take responsibility for their own learning.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and records of pupils' progress over time. Discussions were held with staff, governors and pupils, and questionnaires returned by parents were considered. A range of documentation was also examined. 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. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average. It serves families who live in a once thriving mining village. The area has more social disadvantage than average and unemployment is high. Although the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, this does not accurately reflect the number of families on low incomes. A very high proportion of pupils attend the school with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy Schools Status, Quality Mark and Activemark. The school is a training centre for students.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good standard of education for its pupils. The key reasons for its success are the outstanding care and support pupils receive and the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, who ensures that pupils achieve well. In this very supportive environment, parents' overwhelmingly positive views are fully justified. Their comments include, 'I am proud my child goes to such a fantastic school. Children are embraced for their individuality. It is a very happy place to learn'.

Children enter Reception with skills that are below those expected for their age. They are particularly low in speech and language. All groups of pupils through the school make good progress. By the end of Year 6 pupils' achievement is good and standards are broadly average. Results in national tests have been mostly average over the past few years, with a steady increase in numbers reaching higher levels in science, mathematics and reading. In Year 2, the standards are broadly average. Writing is correctly identified for further development in the school. While standards in writing are improving, they are not as high as reading and mathematics because fewer pupils reach the higher levels by the end of Year 6. A number of successful strategies, such as the 'big writing project', are beginning to impact positively on standards. There has been a significant improvement in pupils' handwriting since the previous inspection due to the concerted effort of all staff.

Teaching and learning are good or better because priorities for improvement are effectively identified through monitoring and appropriate actions are taken. This enables all pupils to learn successfully. Lessons are well planned and work is accurately matched to the wide differences in abilities and ages. The enthusiasm shown by teachers in delivering interesting lessons helps to motivate pupils to work hard and do well. One pupil expressed his enjoyment when he said, 'Everything about our learning is great fun'. Pupils are encouraged from an early age to show good levels of initiative. In one literacy lesson for example, pupils were given the responsibility to plan and evaluate a performance of different poems they had chosen. For the large numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, individual programmes and strong adult support contribute to their growing confidence and good learning.

There are robust systems in place to track the progress that pupils make through the school. This means that teachers know how well pupils are doing and generally provide good guidance on their progress. Marking in writing is very helpful, but it is less so in other subjects. Pupils contribute well to their learning in writing by helping to set and review their own targets. In some cases in the junior classes pupils set their own targets without enough consultation from their teachers. These targets are not always challenging enough for the more able pupils to reach higher levels in their writing and achieve well. Homework is well supported by parents and helps to accelerate pupils' learning. The school has responded well to parents' requests for family learning programmes. The school's excellent website keeps parents fully informed about school life. In particular, information on attendance has raised levels to broadly average this year.

A relevant and creative curriculum successfully meets pupils' needs and interests. The school makes the most of visitors and visits to bring learning to life. Well-maintained accommodation and good resources heighten pupils' enjoyment. Subjects are often linked together to enrich the learning. There is scope to develop writing skills further in other subjects to help pupils to reach higher standards. Pupils are proud of their involvement within the school community.

The school council are pleased with the good work they are doing in sampling and choosing healthy lunches. There are good links with the village and especially the church. The mining industry is given a good focus in topics and this keeps local traditions strong. Pupils are keen to support different charities overseas. This extends their satisfactory knowledge of different cultures. The teaching of French and visits by older pupils to France is adding to pupils' awareness of Europe. The school recognises that there is more to do in this area and further opportunities are planned.

Excellent care and support help pupils to develop into confident and responsible young people. A strong ethos of respect permeates all aspects of school life. This has a significant impact on pupils' good personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Relationships are excellent and behaviour is exemplary because pupils are very caring. For example, when some pupils are seen to be struggling to complete the adventure trail at breaktime there is always another pupil close at hand to help out. Pupils say there is hardly any bullying and they feel totally safe because the school takes excellent care of them. Checks during the inspection indicated safeguarding procedures comply fully with government legislation. There are good opportunities for pupils to keep fit and healthy, including a healthy breakfast club, 'Huff and Puff' activities at lunchtimes and many sporting activities after school. The school is successful in preparing pupils for their future lives. As well as reaching good standards in the basic skills, pupils understand the importance of learning to enable them to pursue the careers of their choice in the 21st century.

In the good leadership and management there is strong teamwork and a shared commitment towards sustained improvement. The driving force behind the school's success is the headteacher. His enthusiasm, vision and determination that all pupils will succeed and enjoy life in school is overwhelmingly recognised by parents. The school is particularly successful in equipping the most vulnerable pupils with the life skills they need to do well. Through rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation, the school accurately knows its strengths and where it could improve. Challenging targets were met in 2007. Governors at the previous inspection were very supportive of the school, but were less effective in holding it to account. They now take an active part in the school's strategic direction. This has been achieved through more focused committees, regular training and closer involvement in the monitoring and evaluation of new initiatives with subject leaders. In this positive climate, where leaders at all levels are shaping the direction of the school, good improvements have been made since the previous inspection and many strengths maintained. The school gives good value for money and is well placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

'My daughter has flourished into a confident, bright little girl who is soaking up all of her learning. I could not have had a better start for her education in Reception'. This is just one of the many glowing commendations by parents. Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good and they thrive in a secure, lively and very stimulating indoor environment. The outdoor area is still being developed to provide facilities for all areas of learning. The children quickly settle into this very supportive environment and are positively encouraged to work together, as well as to plan some of their own learning. Many children on entry to the school have poor speech and language skills. Staff focus particularly on this weaker aspect of their language development and children soon catch up. The planning of a camp in the school grounds and the making of an imaginary barbeque during the inspection provided outstanding opportunities

for the children to develop their spoken language. Highly skilled leadership and management and at times outstanding teaching ensure children make good progress. By the end of the Reception year most children reach the goals expected of five-year-olds. Highly effective partnerships exist with parents, which engage them fully in their children's early development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more able pupils in the junior classes with challenging targets for writing.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to develop and improve their writing skills more widely across the curriculum.

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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	3
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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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

16 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Tudhoe Colliery Primary School, County Durham, DL16 6TJ

It was lovely to visit your school because you all made me feel so welcome. I wish I could have spent more time with you all as there were so many positive things you wanted to tell me about the school. I agree with you all that you go to a good school and in some areas it is excellent.

One of the first things I noticed was that everyone seems to really enjoy school, even if it was SATS week! You told me that your teachers make lessons fun and they really care for you. Your teachers and all adults in the school give you outstanding care and support. I enjoyed the lessons I visited very much and they were all good or better. I wish I lived nearer so I could join the Reception children on their camping trip, especially to enjoy all the lovely food you are planning to make on the barbeque. You are all making good progress because the teaching is so good.

When I watched you in the playground on the new adventure trail I noticed how well you all get on together. You show each other so much respect and your behaviour is excellent. I was impressed with how well the school council has helped to bring about improvements to health and fitness in the school.

The headteacher and all other staff are doing a great job and making a big difference to your school. They involve the governors and your parents to make sure that you receive a good education. Everyone has worked extremely hard to make the building so attractive and well equipped. They have also provided you all with many opportunities to learn outside of the classroom through visits and clubs after school. I know many of you older pupils are eagerly waiting for your trip to France.

Even though your school is good, your headteacher and the other school leaders are keen to make it even better. They are going to give some of you in the junior classes more challenging targets for writing to help you make more progress. There will also be more opportunities for you all to develop and improve your writing in other subjects such as history and geography. I hope you will all work very hard to make your writing even better than it is now. Good luck to you all.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector