

Montalbo Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114115
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311489
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Derek Sleightholme

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	117
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Pannett
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Bainbridge
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Fairfield Road Barnard Castle County Durham DL12 8TN
Telephone number	01833 637718
Fax number	01833 695837

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school located on the edge of a market town. It serves a diverse population. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. A small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The percentage of pupils entitled to a free school meal is average. The number of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has intermediate designation as an International School. It holds the Artsmark Silver and Activemark awards. Children are admitted to the Nursery from a wide geographical area. At the end of the Nursery year many leave to attend schools in their home locality. Attainment on entry to Reception year is typical for children of their age.

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. It has some good features. 'We are lucky to have such a well run school', is a typical comment that reflects parents' high regard for the school. The headteacher, appointed one year ago, has worked with staff and governors to set clear priorities for the school's development. An early outcome of this new direction is the way the recent decline in standards has been arrested and an assessment system has been established.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and they are keen to show visitors around. They are proud of the garden that they have helped to create, especially the pupil designed mosaic feature, willow arch and adventure tunnel. They feel safe and understand the importance of being healthy. Their involvement in creative projects and sporting events has helped the school secure two national awards. Pupils form good relationships, enjoy taking responsibility and most behave well. They have responded positively to the school community by serving as councillors and by charitable fund raising. Their attendance is satisfactory.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Until recently standards had been declining, especially at Key Stage 1. This has been halted. Standards in core subjects at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are broadly average. The quality of pupils' art is good throughout the school. Most boys, girls, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress. However, those capable of reaching higher standards are not always sufficiently challenged. The steady progress made in most year groups reflects satisfactory teaching, planning and pupil management. Some lessons are lively and pupils acquire key skills through focused, engaging approaches. Consequently progress is more rapid. The better teaching of older pupils does not yet show in higher national test results.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Information and communication technology resources are used well throughout the school. The curriculum is enriched through the teaching of a modern language, visits, visitors and extracurricular clubs. The care of pupils is good. Guidance and support provided to them is satisfactory. Clear target setting provides upper Key Stage 2 pupils with good guidance on how to improve. Other pupils, however, have limited understanding of what working towards a target means. Programmes designed to help vulnerable pupils or those with specific needs make a satisfactory contribution to these pupils' progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although the school has a satisfactory understanding of its strengths and weaknesses it assesses some aspects of its provision too generously. School leaders are new to their roles and at present their skills in data analysis are limited. They do, however, carry out some useful monitoring activities such as checking pupils' work. Governance is satisfactory and governors are improving their contribution to school improvement. The school provides satisfactory value for money and has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and Reception years so that most reach the goals set for their learning by the end of Reception. The school places good emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development, and children make good progress in developing their personal and social skills. Teaching is satisfactory overall,

with strengths in developing children's knowledge and understanding of the world in the Nursery and in helping children make good progress in their language and mathematical development in the Reception class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and in English and mathematics, particularly for the more able.
- Improve consistency in the rate of pupil progress throughout the school.
- Develop leaders and managers monitoring skills especially those of data analysis, so that the self-evaluation process is better informed.
- Extend the practice of setting targets for pupils in upper Key Stage 2 to other year groups.

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

Pupil achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Children in the Foundation Stage make steady progress and most meet the goals set for their learning by the end of Reception. Pupils continue to make steady progress in Key Stage 1. By the end of Year 2, pupils reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Results in national tests in 2006 were average and marked a decline in the school's performance. Unvalidated results for 2007 show an improvement in performance at the expected level, though few pupils reached the higher level in the tests.

Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has been above average until 2006 when there was a decline to average. Unvalidated results for 2007 show an improvement in standards, with pupils making better than expected progress in science and over half reaching the higher level. However, few pupils reached the higher level in English and mathematics.

The inspection confirms that the school has successfully halted the decline in standards. This is the result of staff changes and improved teacher deployment. The inspection found there is no difference in the progress of any group except the more able pupils, who do not make as much progress as they could. Standards in art and design are higher than are usually seen.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy showing visitors the school facilities. They know that the vegetables they successfully grew make an important contribution to being healthy. Pupils feel safe at school. They have a good grasp of personal safety and they know how to secure help if they are troubled. They know that by representing their classes on the school council or working as a playground buddy they are contributing well to the whole school community.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most pupils behave well, they move around the school in an orderly manner and they respect equipment. Older Key Stage 2 pupils recognise the value and potential of the newly introduced personal digital assistants to their adult life. Pupils like most lessons especially those where visiting specialists help them to develop creative techniques and acquire games skills. They know that the garden reading chairs they helped to carve with a sculptor are in a location where they can sit quietly

and have some personal time. They acknowledge that their recent success in a local school football match is founded on collaboration and team spirit. Pupils have a good record of supporting charities and local events. They regularly contribute to festivals such as harvest thanksgiving and singing to the elderly at Christmas. Pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

As a result of satisfactory teaching most pupils make secure progress. There are pockets of good teaching, in the Reception year and the class of Year 5 and 6 pupils. In the Reception year, children make good progress in communication, language and literacy skills. When adult led activities are provided they focus well on learning letters and sounds.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and they manage pupils well. They use information and communication technology confidently to enhance learning experiences. In Years 1 to Year 4, teaching is satisfactory. Learning objectives are clear and explanations are lucid. Although resources are provided to support pupils' varying abilities, some teachers do not sufficiently intervene and challenge more able pupils to make quicker progress. Pupils in the upper junior years make good progress because lessons are lively and engaging. Here, teaching challenges pupils to think rapidly. Expectations are high with pupils receiving timely feedback on their individual progress. Pupils' exercise books confirm that progress is good and marking is helping pupils to acquire a clear picture of their own gains. Many respond to their teacher's marking comments by citing how they intend to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The enrichment programme is good and includes French. Timetables confirm sufficient time is given to core subjects. Specific learning programmes are used to help pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress in core skills. The good allocation of time to physical education has helped the school achieve the Activemark. Sometimes work successfully started in one subject leads to successful learning opportunities in another. Upper Key Stage 2 pupils used tuning forks to learn about sound; they then applied this understanding when they designed and made musical instruments.

Successful school partnerships ensure pupils access specialist teaching particularly in creative experiences and games skills. An African dance group worked throughout the school extending pupils' cultural experiences. Recently, Year 6 pupils worked with a technician to write and record a short animated film. Pupils can access an appealing range of extra-curricular activities including cookery and football training.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care of pupils is good, the guidance and support they receive is satisfactory. The procedures for child protection are robust with a vigilant approach to safeguarding. Pupils are well cared for and supervised. Appropriate policies are followed for health and safety, monitoring behaviour and racism. The small number of recorded incidents has been dealt with quickly and

appropriately. Risk assessments are appropriately made. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties and those in vulnerable groups are supported sensitively. They access key skill programmes that help them to make similar progress to others given their starting points.

Academic guidance is inconsistently applied. Revised marking arrangements are helping pupils to have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve. However, it is only in the upper junior years that the process of setting pupils targets is established. These older pupils know their subject level and what is required to improve because their personal targets are recorded prominently on the covers of their exercise books. Younger pupils do not know what is meant by a target.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, through good and purposeful leadership, is helping the school to deliver its main aim 'to develop each child to their maximum potential'. Key outcomes of her leadership are a halt to the recent decline in standards, the introduction of a coherent assessment system to track each pupil's progress and high levels of parental satisfaction. The headteacher leads a new leadership team. School leaders are currently discharging their responsibilities satisfactorily to support pupils' personal and academic development. As yet this new team have had limited time to develop their roles.

School leaders are determined to raise teacher expectations and challenge pupils more successfully. Accordingly they have revised targets set for pupils currently in Year 6 to levels that, if met, would represent good achievement. Although the leadership team are keen to succeed, their influence is not yet resulting in an upturn in standards across the school. The school's self evaluation process is satisfactory and correctly leads to the identification of appropriate priorities. Not all senior leaders are sufficiently confident in the interpretation of pupil performance data. The governors support the school well and are developing their role as 'critical friends'. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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	3

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	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	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	3
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	3
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

12 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Montalbo Primary School, Durham, DL12 8TN

I enjoyed my recent visit to your school. Thank you for helping me. I enjoyed meeting you, visiting your classrooms, looking at your work and talking to you about your school. I know the headteacher and her staff want you to do well and to be happy there. Your school is a satisfactory school but it offers you many opportunities to develop responsibility, to learn new skills and to care for each other. I know you are very proud of the school garden you have helped to create.

These are the things I found out about your school during my visit. Most of you make satisfactory progress because you are settled in lessons and behave well.

When I observed you in lessons and looked at your exercise books I realised that in some classes you make quicker progress. I found that this is because the work you do is sometimes more suited to your abilities, particularly for those of you capable of harder work. I also found that only the older pupils knew they had targets to work towards.

I saw several good things. I know you feel safe and happy because the adults care for you. I know many of you like helping at school by taking on responsibilities such as serving on the school council, being a buddy and assisting with daily routines. I was really impressed with your art work, attractively displayed throughout school. It shows you enjoyed working with artists and that most of you have made good progress in this subject. You told me how you are now excited about learning to use the new personal digital assistants that have been bought for older pupils.

The next priorities for your school are to:

- ensure that you all make good progress throughout the school. You can do something about this by working hard and doing the best you can for your teachers
- make sure you improve in reading, writing and number work
- provide the younger pupils with targets and explain these to them
- make sure that all the senior teachers use all their skills to check everything in school is working well.

I wish you and all the staff the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Sleightholme

Lead Inspector