

Witton Gilbert Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114122
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311492
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Joan Elton

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	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Copestake
Headteacher	Mrs Judith Hodgson
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Sacriston Lane Witton Gilbert Durham County Durham DH7 6TF
Telephone number	0191 371 0424
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average rural primary school, where almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. Of those from minority ethnic heritages, very few are at the early stages of learning English. A small percentage of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has a breakfast club and an independent nursery on site. The school has achieved Awards for Healthy Schools, Basic Skills and Eco-Action.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils, parents and community generally hold it in very high regard. As one parent writes: `the school provides a very caring, happy, safe and secure environment, with the children's best interests taken into consideration at all times`.

Children make an excellent start to school because of close working relationships with the on-site private Nursery and familiarity with premises and staff. They enter Reception with skills often below those typical for this age group but by the end of Reception the majority have achieved the nationally agreed early learning goals. Pupils of all abilities continue to make good progress throughout the rest of the school because the school tries hard to match teaching and the curriculum to pupils' needs. By the end of Year 6 the large majority of pupils are working at or above national expectations. This represents good progress.

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well, take responsibility seriously and show very positive attitudes in lessons and about the school. They know how to keep themselves healthy and safe and have participated in full school and community events such as Consett Music Festival. Pastoral care for the pupils is very good. The school keeps all aspects of pupil protection, safety and security under regular review, including staff training. Pupils develop well emotionally, morally and socially as well as academically. The buddy system, where older pupils work alongside younger ones, develops their ability to mix socially with a wider range of pupils. Academic guidance is good. Pupils know how well they are doing because of accurate assessment and detailed tracking. Teachers encourage pupil self-assessment and mark pupils' work constructively. Pupils are also given targets to improve their work. However, opportunities to extend their learning by responding to teachers' marking are often missed and suggestions for improvement are frequently repeated.

Teaching and learning are good and pupils' basic skills, including ICT, are well developed through a broad, relevant and often exciting curriculum. Staff work hard to make their lessons as interesting and creative as possible. They have good subject knowledge and emphasise links across the curriculum, using every opportunity to practise basic skills. Some outstanding lessons were observed during this inspection. In these all pupils were strongly challenged and made exceptional progress. When learning was less effective, assessment information was not used effectively to plan activities for all abilities and progress for some groups lost pace.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has worked successfully to build a very effective staff team. She has correctly identified areas for development and targeted appropriate strategies for improvement. These are beginning to accelerate pupils' progress because all staff are well trained and highly committed. Governance is also good. Governors work well with the headteacher and staff, to provide the best resources. They are actively involved in school life and contribute well to its development. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the leadership team of staff and governors has effectively addressed all issues identified at the time of the last inspection. The school has good capacity for further improvement and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Reception class provision is good in all areas of learning. Effective leadership is establishing strong and growing links with the adjacent independently run nursery class. Therefore, children

are already familiar with the setting and settle quickly. Children make good progress from starting points that are often below the expected levels, especially in language. By the end of the Reception year, most reach the expected levels for their age, with some doing better than this, particularly in their personal and social development. Children enjoy school because learning is fun and they are well looked after. There is a well planned variety of interesting and stimulating activities in both the classroom and the outside areas. Staff work very purposefully together and the good teaching is based on accurate knowledge of children's capabilities. This is particularly apparent as staff extend children's learning through well judged questioning. However, there is sometimes less attention to planning specific tasks to challenge children at different levels.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more effective use of assessment information when planning pupils' work in order to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for all abilities.
- Ensure all pupils have opportunities to respond to teachers' marking in order to extend learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' current work shows that standards are above average by Year 6 and achievement is good. After starting Reception with skills below the level of development typical for this age group, children make good progress due to good teaching. The majority enter Year 1 with skills typical for their age.

Pupils continue to make good progress during Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are now on track to reach above average standards. This is an improvement on the previous year's national assessment results, which showed pupils were broadly average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This improvement has occurred because of new initiatives since September 2007. These include more accurate assessment of pupils' progress, regular monitoring of teaching and learning and innovations in writing and mental arithmetic. More pupils are now expected to reach higher levels in Years 2 and 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop a good understanding of right and wrong; they are polite and their behaviour is good in lessons and around school. They enjoy coming to school and feel safe and secure, knowing that staff will deal fairly with the rare behavioural incident. Attendance, however, remains around the national average. Pupils gain greater understanding of lives elsewhere through the school's many links with other countries. They understand much about the cultural diversity in Britain and how to play their part in ensuring that 'everyone is equal'. The pupils know how to stay healthy; they eat healthily and appreciate the many opportunities to take exercise. Pupils develop good awareness of the needs of others. They all enjoy contributing to the school's family atmosphere through the extensive buddy system: older pupils look after younger ones and all are keen to take responsibilities. The school council gives pupils a voice and it helps plan important developments such as improving the outdoor play areas. Pupils are well prepared to take care of themselves as they move on through the educational system.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers develop pupils' previous learning well because of accurate assessment and a detailed focus on pupils' individual progress. They are knowledgeable about current national developments and are committed to working as a team to improve standards. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good: pupils enjoy their lessons and show positive attitudes. Teachers plan lessons with interesting activities and well chosen resources. In a number of lessons, these activities do not challenge all pupils and more accurate planning is needed using individual assessment. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good because they are well supported by very capable teaching assistants.

In some very effective lessons all pupils were challenged and the variety of pace and activity sustained concentration throughout. In these lessons there were opportunities for collaborative learning, relevant cross-curricular themes, and very good use of technology. Pupils generally participate in their own assessment against given criteria. Teachers support this process by constructive marking. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. Marking is most effective when pupils respond to teachers' comments, for example by making corrections. As a result their learning is consolidated. This good practice is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It has recently been reviewed to ensure progression, relevance and creativity. Priority is given to core subjects but there is good depth of study across the whole curriculum. Teachers use cross-curricular opportunities very effectively to extend basic skills, particularly writing. Information and communication technology (ICT) is now well integrated across the curriculum and pupils' skills are good. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the creativity weeks, when they work with different age groups on themes such as Fun and Fitness. These bring excitement to the curriculum. The pupils appreciate the variety of visits and visitors that extend their learning as well as the many after school clubs. The priority given to personal development is successful and involvement with other European schools broadens pupils' outlook. Pupils respond particularly well in French lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares well for pupils. The health and safety of all children is carefully considered and all necessary child protection and safeguarding requirements are in place. Good relationships with other agencies have been well employed, for example in promoting community cohesion. The 'Everyone is Equal' project has very successfully provided well organised activities to consider and combat racism. All members of staff have good knowledge of individual pupils; they are well aware of their needs and ways to meet them. Many parents are justifiably confident in the school's care of their children. Support for vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is sensitive and effective. Tracking of pupils' academic progress has been revised, improving accuracy and links to pupils' class work, particularly in English. The

information is being increasingly used to monitor provision and inform pupils of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The relatively new headteacher has worked very successfully to establish a very effective and supportive team. She has a clear vision for taking the school forward and has prioritised the professional development of all staff to ensure success. As a result, staff have clearly defined roles and the necessary training and confidence to implement change successfully. Initiatives such as the curricular review, improved assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress have energised the work of the school and sharpened focus on pupils' needs. Lessons are regularly monitored and staff and pupils evaluate their work against progress criteria. As a result, provision more accurately meets pupils' needs and progress has accelerated.

Governance is good. Like the staff team, governors are highly committed to improvement. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development and some actively help in school and with extra-curricular activities. They are proud of their achievement in setting up strategies to change behaviour, particularly with regard to racism. With the headteacher and staffing team they have effectively managed the finances of the school to provide enhanced staffing ratios and single age classes.

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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	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?	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	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

2 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Witton Gilbert Primary School, Durham, DH7 6TF

Thank you for being so friendly and courteous when we visited your school to find out how well you are doing. We agree with you that your school is a good school. It has many good features and we also found two ways in which it could be even better. Please extend our thanks to your parents for completing the questionnaire. Their comments were most helpful.

You enjoy your lessons because you are taught well. Your teachers try very hard to make your lessons interesting. They use the whiteboards well and have put up many good displays to help you with your learning. They also take very good care of you, supporting and guiding you well. We are very pleased you are so knowledgeable about keeping healthy and safe. When we examined your work, we thought that you had made good progress since September, especially in mental arithmetic and writing. Your practical work in science is also good and your explanations are very clear. You have all studied a wide range of interesting topics and we know from your comments how much you appreciate the special weeks like Book Week and the after-school clubs.

To help you further, we have asked your school to do the following.

- To make sure your teachers challenge all of you throughout the lesson, no matter what your ability. Your teachers have a very good knowledge of what you can do when they plan your lessons. We want them to make sure the activities they plan are neither too easy nor too hard. You can help your teachers by listening carefully, thinking and explaining how you feel.
- To let you have an opportunity to read your teachers' marking and try to correct your errors or to practise some aspect your teachers think will improve your work. You can help by reading your teachers' marking carefully and trying to include their suggestions in your next piece of work.

Thank you for making our time with you so very pleasant and interesting.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Elton

Lead inspector