

West Rainton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114128
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311495
Inspection date	1 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Scott

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	115
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Marsh
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Newton (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2005
School address	West Rainton Houghton le Spring Tyne and Wear DH4 6RN
Telephone number	0191 5843805
Fax number	0191 5845047

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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:

- standards in mathematics and writing, and their development across the curriculum
- the independence of pupils in their learning and community involvement
- the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation.

Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, analyses of pupils' work, performance data, parents' questionnaires and the school's documentation, and from discussions with pupils, staff and governors. 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

The school mainly serves children from the village of West Rainton, where there is some social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds, with a small but significant number of pupils from Traveller and Gypsy/Roma families. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has an acting headteacher because of the current long-term illness of the substantive headteacher.

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 with some outstanding aspects. The impressive leadership by the acting headteacher, the upbeat teamwork of the staff, the excellent quality of care and an increasingly exciting curriculum produce an excellent ethos. As a result, pupils thrive, especially in their personal development which is outstanding. The school is undergoing an uncertain time with the absence of the headteacher. It is, therefore, to the great credit of all staff, governors and pupils that the school is not only maintaining the good provision seen at the last inspection but also improving it.

All pupils achieve well and standards are satisfactory overall. It is particularly noteworthy that pupils from Traveller and Gypsy/Roma families achieve equally well, in view of the extended absences that some of them have. The links that the school has forged with their families and external agencies have clearly borne fruit. Pupils usually enter Year 1 with standards that are typical for their age and make good progress throughout the school. Standards are still broadly average by Year 2 but, by the end of Year 6, standards are usually above average in English and science. Standards in mathematics tend to be average. This year, standards are on track to be average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. This still represents good achievement for this year group.

The school is already tackling identified weaknesses in writing and mathematics in several ways, including better use of assessment and academic guidance. Pupils are very appreciative of the range of helpful targets and advice they receive; they say it makes a difference. Certainly, the excellent systems for monitoring pupils' progress give staff highly focused information to support pupils. The new, creative curriculum inspired by the acting headteacher is also a key factor. Learning is not only fun but has relevance and meaning. For example, Year 6 pupils understood complex coordinates by mapping an historical voyage of discovery around the world. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 explored fractions by adapting the quantities of ingredients for a vegetable soup they would later make. Such activities motivate pupils and spur them to work purposefully. Their attitudes to learning are outstanding. Pupils concentrate very hard in lessons; their neat, accurate work demonstrates their concern for quality. Attendance is satisfactory.

Another initiative to improve standards has involved giving pupils greater scope for taking more ownership for their learning. This is clearly working well. In all lessons, pupils are able to work on their own with great maturity. They are developing better skills at solving problems in mathematics, for example, and readily offer imaginative ideas for stories. Although all the school's actions will take some time to be fully effective, the benefits are already evident, notably in the current Year 6 class which made significant progress this year. This year group had fallen behind because of some weaknesses in previous teaching, which have now been remedied.

The pupils are a credit to the school and their families. Their behaviour is hard to fault. They are extremely responsible, considerate and very caring for one another. Older pupils look after younger ones instinctively. There are playground helpers and mediators but they are not an overt presence because, for the most part, pupils play and work together harmoniously. They love their school and are fully involved through the school council in developing, for example, an allotment and a healthy tuck shop. They are an integral part of their local community. They have helped to design the village play park, write a regular column in the village newsletter

and celebrate the ex-mining culture of the area. Their high self-esteem is a strong feature of their excellent spiritual development.

Teaching is good overall, although its quality varies from satisfactory to outstanding. There are strengths common to all classrooms which promote good achievement. For instance, lessons have a very happy and productive atmosphere. Pupils are very clear about their learning because objectives are clear and teachers are adept at explaining new concepts. In most lessons, the work is well matched to pupils' needs and there is a brisk pace to learning. Indeed, much of the teaching is very effective; it is outstanding where high expectations and a rich curriculum are skilfully interwoven. However, teachers' expectations of pupils are not always high enough, and some pupils work within their comfort zone. Pupils themselves said that their work was not always hard enough.

A high level of care is intrinsic to the school's philosophy. Formal systems to safeguard pupils are secure; meticulous records are kept. Parents and pupils speak highly of how they feel valued and safe, because of the staff's skills in dealing with vulnerable pupils or sensitive issues. 'Teachers always listen to what my child has to say,' was a typical parental comment. The school has received national recognition for its work with Traveller and Gypsy/Roma families. This is typical of the very good leadership of the acting headteacher. Well supported by the acting deputy headteacher, she has ensured that all staff share the same understated but effective philosophy. The governors play a significant part and have done particularly well in managing the leadership situation. The school values their support and that of the local authority. The school has very good self-evaluation and its actions for improvement are already bearing fruit. The school is clearly in good shape and in a strong position to develop further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision in the Reception class is good and children achieve well. They begin with skills and abilities that are below those typical of four-year-olds, especially in language and sometimes in personal and social skills. Such weaknesses vary from year-to-year. An exciting curriculum and effective teaching ensure good progress and, by the end of the year, children tend to reach levels expected for their age in all areas of learning. The classroom is vibrant and lively, and children have ample scope to develop independence through discovery in and out of the classroom. Activities are purposeful and productive; for example, catching 'fish' with words written on them strengthened children's basic reading skills. The provision is well led; staff are well aware of the children's needs and ensure that they are well challenged in a safe environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' academic achievement.

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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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	1
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?	1

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 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Rainton Primary School, Durham, DH4 6RN

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school and to tell you what I found out. I thoroughly enjoyed my day with you and really appreciated all that you had to tell me about your school. Would you please thank your parents for the helpful information they gave me in their questionnaires.

Like you, I think that yours is a good school. Parts of it are even better – especially you pupils! Your personal development is excellent, including your behaviour and attitudes to work. In lessons, I found it hard to fault your concentration and sheer common sense in just getting on with your work. I know you enjoy your work and appreciate all the new exciting things that you now do in lessons to help to improve, particularly in your writing and mathematics. You are great with each other – very responsible and caring. You play a full part in the development of the school and within your local community. I especially liked the way you all get involved together, regardless of your age, interests and backgrounds.

You achieve well in your work. Standards are usually good, although they are average this year. I am sure you know that your writing and mathematics could be better. The school has already done really well to help you improve by giving you clear targets and frequent advice, by encouraging you to take more responsibility for your own learning and by making learning exciting and relevant to everyday life. These are the ideal things to help you to improve. Your teachers are good at what they do and you get some very good teaching. However, I have asked the school to make sure that all your work is suitably challenging. Some of you told me that, at times, your work is a bit easy.

I am pleased that you feel very safe and valued in school. The school is excellent at taking care of you and making you feel important. Staff are doing a really good job in the unfortunate absence of your headteacher. Mrs Newton, the staff and governors are making sure that the school is not only maintaining its strengths but that it is also improving them. This is a great tribute to them – and to you, because your whole-hearted cooperation is central to the school's development.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Lead inspector