

# Heathfield Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114204
<b>Local Authority</b>	Darlington
<b>Inspection number</b>	311514
<b>Inspection date</b>	31 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Gianna Ulyatt

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	459
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sandra Geraghty
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Nick Blackburn
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 January 2005
<b>School address</b>	The Broadway Darlington County Durham DL1 1EJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 252144
<b>Fax number</b>	01325 252144

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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 effectiveness of leadership and its impact on provision
- the impact teaching is having on addressing differences in standards between subjects and between genders
- provision in the Foundation Stage.

Evidence was gathered from performance data and other school documentation, observations of teaching and learning, the work produced by pupils (including how pupils interact with each other and their response to what is provided for them), parents' questionnaires and 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 the school's own assessment, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

The school is almost twice the size of other primary schools nationally and is set in an area of social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils who claim a free school meal is broadly average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The number of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average and very few pupils do not have English as their first language.

## 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 because it is well focused on ensuring all pupils reach their full potential. The 'I Can!' motto permeates all aspects of school life. As a result, pupils achieve well and their personal development is outstanding. The strong leadership of the headteacher, who is relatively new in post, has revitalised the school. The senior management team, some of whom are also new in post, are enthusiastic and support the headteacher well. In spite of the school's large size, pupils learn in a warm, friendly, family atmosphere. Pupils show extreme care for each other and thoroughly enjoy coming to school. They show high levels of interest and motivation in all they do and take their learning seriously. The school is constantly striving towards ensuring pupils have the best education as well as opportunities to develop their personal, creative and physical attributes. Parents are truly delighted with the strong and positive influence the school has on their children. This is evident from the very high return of questionnaires and the glowing praise they contain.

Children settle well and make rapid progress in the Foundation Stage, due to good teaching and high levels of care. This good foundation is built on well in Key Stage 1 and pupils reach broadly average standards at the end of Year 2. In the most recent tests, standards were significantly higher than average. The strong attention to early reading skills and letter recognition results in pupils achieving particularly well in these areas. Good progress continues in Key Stage 2, achievement is good and standards are broadly average. Test results for the past two years show an improving trend. School data indicate that current pupils are maintaining this upward trend and that mathematics is set to match results in English. Pupils achieve particularly well in English and science, where almost half attain at the higher level. There are differences in attainment between girls and boys throughout the school. At the end of Key Stage 1, girls attain higher standards than boys particularly in reading and writing. By the end of Key Stage 2, boys attain higher standards in mathematics and girls achieve better in English. In science, both girls and boys achieve equally well. The school is right to be proud of the tremendous care and attention it gives to the specific and individual needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, they achieve exceptionally well at both key stages.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive and have a significant impact on their personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils say, 'No time is wasted because teachers want us all to do our very best.' Pupils enjoy the regular activating exercises in lesson times because it helps them sustain their concentration. Behaviour in and around the school is exemplary and pupils say, '... there is no bullying whatsoever, because we look after each other.' They approach their work in a mature way accepting that it is all right to make mistakes because they clearly understand that it is through correcting errors that their knowledge is deepened. Pupils explain, 'If we enjoy our worries, our success will be even greater.' Pupils show high levels of social responsibility as well as great compassion for those less fortunate than themselves. They willingly support charities both at home and abroad. They learn the meaning of democracy through the school council. Pupils have a strong voice in school and have influenced many developments ranging from interviewing the new headteacher to providing the fruit tuck shop. The latter teaches them simple business skills as well as promoting good health. Pupils are very keen on sport and enthusiastically subscribe to the many school teams.

Pupils learn so successfully because lessons are fun. They are eager to learn and take their learning seriously. Pupils of all abilities feel very well supported. They show exceptional levels of concentration because teachers provide them with activities, such as real-life mathematical problems, that challenge their thinking and make learning meaningful. Pupils know exactly what they are learning and what is expected of them. Teaching assistants are well motivated and very clear about the special role they play in supporting pupils who do not learn as fast as others. Classroom walls resemble a living dictionary promoting pupils' writing strategies and helping them to find just the right word or phrase to enliven their work. New assessment procedures are helping teachers to have a clearer understanding about what each pupil knows and can do and planning takes good account of different learning needs. The new procedures do not yet enable teachers to monitor in sufficient detail the differences in progress between boys and girls. Teachers mark pupils' work well indicating clearly what they have done well and where they need to focus their attention. These are some of the reasons why pupils are making such good progress.

Pupils benefit from a good and balanced curriculum where good emphasis is given to developing basic skills. English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are used effectively to support learning in other subjects. For example, pupils use computer programs to make changes to their photographic portraits. Educational visits, including a recent visit to a local art centre, inspire pupils and have resulted in them drawing very detailed self-portraits. Music and drama are well promoted. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments; others attend a range of after school creative arts activities, as well as the good range of sports clubs.

The school quickly recognises pupils who need extra help with their work and plans daily sessions where they are strongly supported in small groups. Pupils are set by ability for some core subjects; consequently, all pupils become very involved in lessons and no-one feels left out. Good use is made of outside agencies to support the well-being of vulnerable pupils. Child protection procedures are firmly in place and safety audits are conducted on a regular basis.

The strong leadership of the new headteacher has brought about significant changes in a very short space of time. He has introduced consistent assessment and monitoring procedures. He has inspired and motivated the enthusiastic leadership team through 'shared responsibility'. Forward planning is top of the agenda and firmly based on rigorous self-assessment, which is tightly focused on improving standards. There is a common sense of purpose and staff are inspired and empowered to work towards whole-school development. Extensive indoor refurbishments have totally refreshed the appearance of the school. It is a bright, pleasant and colourful learning environment. Governors support the school very well. They question its work and encourage progress. They regularly meet and self-evaluate their own knowledge and abilities so they can better serve the needs of the school. The school is well placed to develop and improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision is good and children progress well. The pre-school experiences children have are very variable. However, the average level of attainment on entry is below that which is typical for their age. Children have limited personal and social skills. Their communication skills are immature. Staff find out quickly what children know and can do through detailed assessment and use this information when planning for their needs. As a result, children make very good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Most children reach the goals expected of five-year-olds.

Activities provided help them to learn how to take care of one another and their environment. They learn to take turns, share resources and behave sensibly. Good emphasis on role-play improves children's speaking skills. Regular practical activities focus on early reading and writing skills; consequently, children are well prepared for future learning. Adults give high levels of care and attention to children. They interact well with them and support their learning, both in directed and self-chosen activities. The curriculum is well planned and gives children great opportunities to learn both indoors and in the extensive and well-resourced outdoor area. Leadership is good because staff work well as a team. All are clear about what is done well and are well focused on developing the good provision even further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Embed the assessment and monitoring procedures to ensure that girls and boys make equally good progress in English and mathematics throughout the school.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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	1

### 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	1
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?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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

1 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heathfield Primary School, Darlington, DL1 1EJ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to me when I visited Heathfield. You are very well mannered and extremely helpful. I know you truly care about your school and each other. I was impressed with the council because pupils of all ages gave me lots of information about the work you do. I was also impressed with your confidence and with the way you listen to each other's views and share good ideas.

You go to a good school because teachers make sure you listen well and work hard. There is always someone there to help you if you get stuck. I was pleased to see how well you concentrate in lessons and this may well be one of the reasons why standards are rising so quickly. You certainly enjoy the challenging activities in mathematics and you discuss problems and solutions well with each other. I also noticed many of you using the exotic vocabulary displayed on your classroom walls to help make your writing so lively and interesting. The way your teachers mark your work is very useful because you now know exactly what you do well and where you need to improve. In some subjects, boys do better than girls and in others girls do better than boys, so I have asked the school to make sure you all do equally well in both English and mathematics. You must therefore try even harder in subjects you find difficult and never forget the school's motto, 'I CAN!'

I was delighted to see the excellent way you behave in school. My discussion with older pupils led me to understand that everyone in school feels safe because pupils look after each other well. I was pleased to see pupils selling fruit at playtime and to know that many of you keep fit by joining the after-school sport and gymnastics clubs.

You know how much the school building has improved recently. The corridors are carpeted, the walls newly painted and displayed with your good work. You can even listen to news, read by pupils, in the main entrance hall.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at school and that you continue to work hard so you are ready for the next school.

With very best wishes,

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector