

Tweedmouth West First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122186
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314232
Inspection date	1 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Cairns
Headteacher	Mrs Brendan Malkin
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2005
School address	Osborne Road Berwick-upon-Tweed Northumberland TD15 2HS
Telephone number	01289 306151
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- achievement and standards and the impact of creative approaches on pupils' learning
- the quality of care, guidance and support with a specific focus on academic guidance
- the quality of the Foundation Stage
- the impact of leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, analysis of pupils' work, school performance information, parents' questionnaires, the school's documentation and discussions with staff, pupils and governors. Other aspect 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 in this report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school in the coastal market town of Berwick. All children are White British. Fewer than average are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies from year-to-year but is currently average. The school holds an Activemark, Artsmark Gold and has Extended School status.

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 a number of outstanding features, which enables pupils to make good progress and achieve well. It provides a rich, friendly and stimulating learning environment which reflects its high aspirations and extremely caring ethos. All pupils are valued and respected. The comment, 'Kids behave because they are given respect and have learnt to respect,' represents the overwhelming view of parents. As a consequence, pupils settle into school life confidently.

Children enter Reception with skills that are broadly typical for their age, though with weaker communication skills. All pupils achieve well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. The results of 2007 national assessments for Year 2 reveal exceptionally high standards in writing and above average standards in mathematics and reading. Inspection evidence shows that current Year 2 pupils are on target to achieve well, although the higher number of pupils with learning difficulties means that standards are currently not quite as high as other years. The good progress continues in Years 3 and 4 though not always at the same brisk pace. By the end of Year 4, overall standards remain above national expectations although school information suggests that standards in mathematics and reading vary to some extent from year-to-year.

Pupils achieve well because the good and often outstanding teaching is challenging and thought-provoking. One parent's comment neatly describes a key factor: 'Pupils are encouraged to come out of their comfort zone'. Planning reflects the high expectations staff have of pupils and all lessons have clear learning goals and challenging learning targets. As a result, pupils know exactly what to do in lessons and achieve high standards. Recently revised reading strategies are extending skills, though in mathematics pupils in Years 3 and 4 do not have enough opportunities to apply their skills to practical situations. Pupils really enjoy their lessons and concentrate hard because teaching is lively and approaches varied. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and skilled, and support pupils well. Relationships in classrooms are excellent, adding to the positive atmosphere. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them and how to improve their work because marking is thorough and helpful guidance added. They demonstrate much skill assessing their own and each other's work. From an early age, pupils are taught to speculate, express views and take responsibility for their learning. As a result, pupils work successfully both independently and collaboratively. These skills and their willingness to work extremely hard are effectively nurtured as pupils' progress through the school. This prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of education.

Personal development is outstanding because the care, guidance and support pupils receive are excellent. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are thorough and meet requirements. Pupils develop into confident, mature and articulate individuals, helped by the many interesting activities that are provided. Their enjoyment is reflected in their excellent attendance. They are taught how to manage risk and consequently show an excellent grasp of how to stay safe and healthy. Stimulating experiences, such as the visit of an African dance group and their study of other beliefs and cultures, add to their understanding of life in a diverse world. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and older pupils take great pride in supporting younger pupils. The school council makes an excellent contribution to the running of the school. Pupils thrive on the opportunities to show initiative as, for example, when presenting an anti-bullying assembly.

Pupils benefit from an excellent curriculum which makes a profound contribution to their exceptional personal development. Some pupils with learning difficulties make excellent progress because activities are so effectively adapted to match their individual needs. Philosophy is taught and promotes thinking about moral and social issues, including discussions about the role of British soldiers keeping the peace in Iraq. Art, music and the study of French are important parts of school life with extra-curricular sessions enthusiastically attended. An excellent programme of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities, making effective use of local links and partnerships, adds to the richness of the curriculum. Pupils also celebrate their local identity. The school is continually refining the curriculum to ensure activities stimulate and excite, for example, modifying reading strategies so that the achievement in writing is enhanced.

The dedicated headteacher, skilfully supported by a talented leadership team, gives clear direction for continued development. School self-evaluation is reflective, self-critical and accurate though occasionally modest in its judgements. Improvements are achieved because strategies are well thought out and their impact carefully monitored and evaluated. The headteacher has made shrewd use of staff development to ensure continued improvement, for example, using the study visits to Reggio Emilia to enhance Foundation Stage provision. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made but the senior leaders and governors are determined not to stand still. The school has very good priorities for improvement which reflect its awareness of any minor areas of concern. The school demonstrates a good capacity to improve, strengthened by the fact that this is a school in which all pupils and adults really do matter.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is good because it is well led and managed. Enthusiastic and purposeful teaching ensures that children make good progress. When children join Reception, their skills and knowledge are broadly typical for their age though their communication skills are weaker. A creative, stimulating curriculum is being systematically enhanced by staff training in Reggio Emilia. Excellent collaborative work with feeder nurseries and parents ensures staff are aware of all the children's needs before arrival. By the time children start Year 1, most children achieve the goals that are set nationally for their learning. Progress is particularly good in developing communication skills because staff provide excellent opportunities for speaking and listening. Play based learning makes good use of outdoor space; there are challenging activities in all areas of learning. Staff systematically record children's progress and use the information well to match activities to individual learning needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for older pupils to apply their mathematical skills.

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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	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?	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	1
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	1

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?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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 Tweedmouth West First School, Northumberland, TD15 2HS

I thoroughly enjoyed my inspection of your school and appreciated your warm, friendly and polite welcome. I was very impressed by the happy family atmosphere and your keenness to work hard in lessons. I really enjoyed talking to the members of the School Council and seeing you enjoy your anti-bullying assembly and playing with your friends at playtime. You go to a good school, which has a number of outstanding strengths. These are some of the things the school does really well.

- You achieve well and reach high standards because your school makes learning interesting, makes you think and gives you help and support when you need it.
- Your behaviour and attendance are excellent, and your exemplary relationships with each other and staff help you with your classroom learning.
- Your school's leaders are determined to continue to improve your school and make sure that you all enjoy your work and make good progress.
- Your staff take great care of you.

I have asked your school to improve your education by making sure older children learn how to use their mathematics skills more confidently in practical situations.

You all have an important part to play improving your school. You can help by continuing to listen very carefully to the advice of your staff, responding to the many thought provoking questions and by working as hard as you possibly can. This will help you produce even better work.

Thank you for helping me with this inspection. I hope the school will keep on building on its many strengths.

Best of luck

Clive Petts

Lead inspector