

Holywell Village First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122195
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314234
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Eva Coulson
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Burns
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2004
School address	Holywell Whitley Bay Tyne and Wear NE25 0LN
Telephone number	0191 2370384
Fax number	0191 2370384

Age group	4–9
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Inspection number	314234

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a broadly averaged size first school situated in Blyth Valley, in south east Northumberland, an area which is average in terms of social and economic advantage. Most pupils are of White British heritage and a smaller proportion than nationally claim a free school meal. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. A new headteacher was appointed to the school in October 2007. The school has recently attained the Activemark and the Financial Management Standard in Schools.

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 where pupils achieve well, attain above average standards and are well equipped for the next stage of their education. It has a good capacity to become even better. The headteacher has made an impressive start and new initiatives aimed at raising standards of reading and writing are already resulting in sustained improvement. Good working partnerships with neighbouring schools are used well to accelerate the rate of change and improvement. Parents are very positive about the school and all that it does to help their children.

Children make a good start in the Reception class so that by the time they enter Year 1 more children than nationally have attained beyond the skills expected for their age. Pupils generally make good progress in Key Stage 1 and usually attain standards above the national average. Although progress is slower in Year 3, by the end of Year 4 standards are above those expected for pupils of their age. Results in national assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2007 were broadly average. These pupils had not built well enough on their good start in the Foundation Stage and made satisfactory rather than good progress. This is because the curriculum, in the past and currently, is not skilfully adapted to take account of the specific needs of year groups, for example when boys considerably outnumber girls. Pupils make good progress in their acquisition of knowledge in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy but do not experience a wide enough variety of activities to apply this knowledge. As a result, a few pupils, in particular boys, lack enthusiasm for learning.

Pupils achieve well because teaching is good. Teachers are responding well to the new whole-school initiatives, for example, the new approach to teaching writing that is implemented in literacy lessons. This is helping to improve pupil progress and raise standards. For most pupils tasks are chosen carefully to match the levels at which pupils are working. Teachers carefully adapt activities for pupils who require extra support with their work, in order to meet their individual needs. This, together with the good levels of expertise of learning support assistants, means that these pupils achieve well and grow in confidence. Assessment information is used well to give pupils targets for improvement in English and mathematics. Teachers provide good levels of feedback to those who do not reach their targets so that these pupils know clearly what they need to do to improve. This is less effective for more able pupils who consistently meet their targets and are not given feedback and challenge to reach the next level in their work.

Staff have been effective in creating a strong caring atmosphere that is reflected in the school's commitment to providing a secure and happy haven for all pupils. Consequently, pupils' personal development is good. They behave well, are respectful and caring of each other. Pupils feel safe and secure and most are keen to learn. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including exercise and a balanced diet. Older pupils value the fact that they have to apply for particular roles in school. Community projects and school based fund-raising helps them to manage money and work in teams.

Leadership and management are good. The impact of greater rigour in the monitoring of pupils' progress is beginning to be felt with standards returning to the above average levels previously seen. The monitoring of school provision is less effective; as a result, resources are not always targeted to where they could have the most impact on pupils learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children begin the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for their age, although skills in reading and writing are below expectations for the children that started in 2007. Children make good progress in all areas of learning and rapid progress in reading. By the end of Reception, most children are working securely within the areas of learning set for children of this age and more children than in other schools nationally are reaching standards beyond those expected. Good induction procedures help the children to settle into school quickly. The quality of teaching and the care, guidance and support children receive are good and they benefit from working within a spacious, well resourced classroom. Staff expertise helps pupils to socialise well and promotes their good behaviour. Children thoroughly enjoy the wide range of learning experiences available in the classroom, but outdoor provision is underdeveloped as a resource to aid children's achievement in physical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. Assessment procedures are well focused ensuring progress is rigorously tracked and activities are well matched to meet children's learning needs. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by the skilled staff. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Adapt the curriculum to meet the needs and interests of all pupils.
- Improve the challenge and feedback for more able pupils in all lessons.
- Rigorously target resources to where they will have the most impact on pupils' learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and standards are above average. Pupils generally make good progress in Key Stage 1 and attain standards above the national average. Results in the national assessments for seven-year-old pupils in 2007 were broadly average and continued a gradual decline in standards since the last inspection. One of the key reasons for this is that not enough pupils exceeded the level expected for their age particularly in reading. Due to good targeted support this decline has been halted and current standards in Key Stage 1 are above those expected. School records show that pupils' progress slows in Year 3 and for most pupils is satisfactory. The rate of progress increases in Year 4 so that by the time they leave the school standards are above what is expected for this age. Throughout Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4 the most able pupils are not always challenged to do as well as they can and although these pupils make at least satisfactory progress they do not always build well enough on their good start in the Foundation Stage. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because the school identifies their needs promptly and they receive good targeted support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils say they are happy and enjoy coming to school. Most have good attitudes to learning although some boys are not always keen to do their best. Attendance is good. Behaviour seen in lessons is generally good and the majority of pupils behave sensibly and safely around the school because they learn to respect and care for each other. Pupils say there is little bullying

and any incidents are quickly dealt with. Relationships are good and pupils are happy to approach staff with their concerns. Pupils show a strong awareness of how to keep safe, for example, when retrieving balls at playtime. They display a good understanding of adopting healthy lifestyles and openly discuss the benefits of eating more fruit and taking exercise. Pupils are learning to make decisions, accept responsibility and develop an understanding of democracy through the active school council. They are very enthusiastic and determined to raise funds to implement their ideas. Monitoring duties are taken very seriously by the older pupils and contribute effectively to the smooth running of the school. Pupils acquire good personal and basic literacy and numeracy skills which prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are well managed and explanations for pupils are clear. Throughout the school strong relationships amongst pupils and staff contribute to pupils' good behaviour, confidence and progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this well to ensure that pupils usually make good progress in their knowledge and understanding, particularly in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. What is less effective is the variety or creativity of teaching styles which means that pupils do not always have interesting activities in which to apply their knowledge. As a result, some pupils are not enthusiastic about learning and their progress in lessons slows. Teachers generally have a good understanding of how pupils are doing and use this information well to build on what pupils already know. At times however, the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to reach the standards of which they are capable. Teaching for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well planned through very effective use of teaching assistants whose experience and skills result in these pupils making consistently good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and fulfils statutory requirements. It caters satisfactorily for most pupils' needs and provides well for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are given good opportunities to promote their personal development and have a good knowledge of how to stay healthy and safe. The curriculum is enriched through a range of visits and these are used well as a focus in the development of pupils writing skills. Extra-curricular provision adds much to pupils' enjoyment of school although the range of opportunities varies throughout the year. Provision for literacy, numeracy and information communication technology has improved and is now good for most pupils. However, the curriculum is not always adjusted well enough to meet the interests and needs of all pupils. As a result, a few, in particular boys, lack enthusiasm for learning. This contributed to the fall in standards in the 2007 national assessments for seven-year-old pupils and is one of the key reasons why these pupils continue to make satisfactory rather than good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality care, guidance and support and this contributes positively to pupils' personal development and well-being. Parents speak warmly of their relationship with school and how well their children are cared for. Child protection and risk assessment procedures

are in place and the school follows recommendations for safeguarding. Support staff are very skilled in providing good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, consequently, individual needs are met and good progress is made. Information collected about pupils' progress is now being used well to identify potential underachievement and targets for improvement are set. However, the involvement of pupils in their learning through self-assessment, knowing how well they have done and how they can improve, is not yet consistently embedded across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Since taking up post the headteacher has quickly evaluated how well pupils are doing and the weaknesses in their knowledge, skills and understanding which are preventing standards from rising. Initiatives such as reading recovery have been effectively introduced and this has resulted in the school focusing accurately on the main priority for development. This has already brought about sustained improvement. Pupils' progress is now carefully monitored to ensure that all are on track to meet the challenging targets set for them. Those who are not making the expected progress are quickly identified and additional support given. Other monitoring systems are however in the early stages of development and these are not yet helping the school to pinpoint exactly what it is about the school's provision which is not fully meeting pupils' needs. Consequently, the school are not always targeting resources, particularly staff resources, to where they are most needed. Governors are supportive and are aware that their systems for evaluation and monitoring have lacked rigour and now have plans in place to focus much more sharply on those areas which are key priorities.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	2
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?	3
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	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

7 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holywell Village First School, Northumberland, NE25 0LN

Thank you all for making the inspection team feel so welcome on their recent visit to your school and how much you helped them to find out all the things that make yours a good school. Please thank your parents for returning the questionnaires and tell them we took all their views into account.

Teaching in your school is good. It is this that helps you to make good progress with your learning so that you achieve standards that are better than other pupils of your age. It was good to see that you behave well, which shows you care about yourself and your friends. I know that you feel safe and happy because all the adults in the school look after you really well.

Some of you say that you do not always find lessons interesting and we agree that the range of activities which you do could, at times, have more variety. We have asked the school to find ways of making some of your work more interesting. Some of you find that work is at times too easy and so we have asked the school to make sure that you have extra challenge in your lessons so that you reach even higher standards. You can help with this by always trying your best. We have also asked that the school to check that resources are always used well to help you to make even more progress.

We send our very best wishes to you all for the future.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector