

Stannington First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122228
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314240
Inspection date	20 May 2008
Reporting inspector	John Heap

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	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Evenden
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Ramm
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2005
School address	Stannington Morpeth Northumberland NE61 6HJ
Telephone number	01670 789276
Fax number	0

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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: the current standards and achievement of pupils, including those in small groups; whether pupils were developing independent learning skills and an understanding of cultural and social diversity; the quality of the school's monitoring and evaluation of its work, including the work of the governing body. The inspector gathered evidence from school documentation and national published assessment data; from interviews with pupils, parents, staff and governors; by observing lessons and other activities and analysing parents' questionnaires and comments. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated 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

This small school serves an area with mixed levels of social and economic advantage. More than half the pupils come from outside the local village. All pupils are White British and none of them is entitled to free school meals. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the number of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is also above the national average. Children's attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage (Reception) is below expected levels. The school has successfully achieved the following awards: Investors in People; Financial Management; ActiveMark; ArtsMark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspection findings confirm that this is a good school that provides good value for money. Pupils and parents appreciate the quality of the school's work and a typical view includes: 'very pleased with the school'. Pupils are keen to report that they feel happy, safe and secure and there is a clear 'family' atmosphere.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The effective and enriched curriculum promotes all these aspects by providing a good mix of opportunities to develop pupils' learning skills and help them to grow as independent people. As a result, pupils enjoy being in school and this shows in their good attendance and attitudes to work. Moral and social development is particularly strong and, consequently, pupils behave well and are sensitive to the needs and views of others. For example, pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider communities when the school council canvasses peer opinion before making decisions, and in making charitable donations. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of leading healthy and safe lifestyles through, for instance, the good work that is done in science. They also have a good understanding of diversity in society through learning about a range of faiths and from the visits and visitors who provide insights into the characteristics and workings of diverse communities.

Achievement and standards are good because the high expectations of pupils are mainly realised. Given pupils' good attitudes to work and the progress they make they are well prepared for the future. From the broadly typical skills and abilities at the start of Reception, pupils progress well and are on target to reach above expected levels by the end of Year 4. Progress is best in reading and mathematics. Although caution is necessary when analysing national test data of such small groups of pupils, the results over time at the end of Year 2 confirm this picture. There have been particular gains in reading because the school has made this a priority for development in recent times. In particular, pupils are much better at being able to 'read between the lines'.

Teaching in English has focused much more on developing pupils' understanding of what authors and characters mean, rather than just what they say or do. There has also been a successful teaching focus on developing practical mathematics skills and investigating. Consequently, pupils are increasingly using their basic number and measuring skills, for example, in real-life activities such as surveying the many trees in the excellent grounds. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were thoroughly enjoying collaborating with partners to accurately measure, set heights and find the girth of the tree at that height.

Writing standards are not as high as those in reading and mathematics, particularly for the more able pupils. Nevertheless, pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils often demonstrate that they have good basic skills and are able to write extended pieces. Progress is slower than it should be because of inconsistencies in the quality of marking. For example, Year 4 pupils have a clear view of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further, whereas, in Year 2, there is a clear picture of achievements but not of what they need to do to improve further.

Overall, the school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. The main strengths in teaching include: good classroom management that ensures few disruptions in pupils' learning; very good relationships which foster pupils contentment and the willingness to share with staff any concerns they have about learning; the excellent use of resources that enables all pupils

to benefit fully from all the school has to offer. This final point is very important in the good provision for pupils with additional learning needs. For example, special adaptations to computers mean that pupils with specific and additional needs can use them well and this helps them to make good progress.

Leadership and management are good and the school has continued to progress well since the previous inspection. The headteacher and staff effectively combine heavy teaching commitments with broad responsibilities, such as subject leadership. The school is diligent in maintaining a good level of care for the pupils, including meeting statutory requirements in areas such as safeguarding and child protection. The monitoring of pupils' achievements has improved to a good standard and the school has an increasingly clear picture of how well pupils are doing. Furthermore, there are individual learning targets set from the monitoring data, including for writing. School improvement planning identifies the right priorities, but evaluative data are not used well enough to make sure that the measures of success are sharp and challenging. Self evaluation is accurate. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is supportive, but too reliant on the school's management for the information that it receives. This means that it is not truly active in evaluating the work of the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of provision is good and there has been an improvement since the previous inspection in the outdoor facilities. Children progress from starting with broadly typical skills and abilities to being on target to achieve the nationally expected levels by the end of the Reception year. Progress in academic and personal skills and abilities is good. Teaching and learning is focused well on children acquiring a good grounding in basic skills, but the curriculum is much broader than this. There is an adequate balance between teacher-led and child initiated activities. Links with parents are good and the effective induction process leads to the children settling quickly and happily. Leadership and management are good. Parents are satisfied with what is going on, and the following view typifies this: 'I am extremely happy with the teaching/learning my child has received.....The fact my child sometimes asks to go to school at weekends shows how much he enjoys it.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for the more able pupils.
- Make marking more consistent, so that pupils in Year 2 have a clear picture of what they need to do to improve.
- Sharpen the measures of success for improvement priorities, particularly those for raising standards.

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 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?	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

22 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Stannington First School, Northumberland, NE61 6HJ

I thoroughly enjoyed being in your good school this week. Thank you for your warm welcome, courtesy and the help you provided.

What I really liked about your school:

- your good personal development, particularly the good behaviour and attitudes to school and the very strong relationships you develop
- the way that the good teaching and curriculum, and effective care promote personal development and give you the good grounding for the future
- the good progress made by all of you, including those who have extra learning needs
- the improvements made to the outdoor premises, including the area for the Reception class
- the way that you all contribute to a safe and caring atmosphere in the school
- the big improvements to the grounds where you enjoy playing and working
- the good leadership and management.

To improve your school further, staff will help you make your writing better. They are going to improve marking, so that you have an even better idea of what you need to do to learn even more. You can be a great help by continuing to do your best work and following the advice from your teachers. They are also going to use the records of your achievements more widely to show whether and how the school is improving.

I wish you well and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Heap

Lead inspector