

Blyth Newsham First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122261
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314253
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	321
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Grant Davey
Headteacher	Mrs Anne-Marie Armstrong
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Warwick Street Blyth Northumberland NE24 4NX
Telephone number	01670 353124
Fax number	01670 797611

Age group	3–9
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2008
Inspection number	314253

© 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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average first school which serves an area of above average social and economic deprivation. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who claim a free school meal is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability is below average, although this varies from class-to-class and in some year groups is well above average. A well above average proportion of pupils have a statement of their special educational needs. The school provides education for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). From September 2005 until August 2008 the headteacher was also head of a neighbouring First School. From September 2007, due to the pending closure of the neighbouring school, the two schools shared the Newsham site and pupils worked alongside each other in classrooms. On closure of the neighbouring school many pupils transferred to Newsham. The school is part of the Northumberland Local Authority reorganisation plans and will become a primary school from September 2009. A new building is currently under construction on the existing site, severely limiting the space currently available for use.

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. During a period of substantial reorganisation the inspirational leadership and outstanding management of the headteacher has ensured that standards have risen and that pupils' outstanding personal development has been maintained. The headteacher, staff and governors are unwavering in their aim to provide the children in their care with an outstanding quality of education and they are well on their way to reaching this goal. Governors have an excellent grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and systematically call the school to account for its actions. As a result of the clarity of vision and determination to improve the school has an excellent capacity to make further improvement. In response to the inspection questionnaire, parents paid tribute to the efforts of the headteacher and staff, one commenting: 'safe, happy, excited children learning lots of exciting things is all we as parents could want and Newsham First is all we could wish for in a school'.

The impact of outstanding leadership ensures consistency in pupils' progress throughout the school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) get off to a good start. This is built on well in Key Stage 1 and pupils reach average standards by the end of Year 2. Since the last inspection, standards in Years 3 and 4 have improved year-on-year and in optional tests in 2008, pupils attained standards above those expected of pupils of their age. Leaders have brought about this improvement by setting challenging targets for staff and by providing outstanding support and guidance to both adults and pupils. Staff are fully committed to raising pupils' self-esteem and building up their confidence. As a result, pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and the majority attend regularly. They have excellent attitudes to learning and behave exceptionally well. Their understanding of how to maintain healthy lifestyles and keep themselves safe is impressive. Pupils are rightly proud of their role in decision making, acting as school councillors and safety representatives. In applying for these posts they learn much about the world of work whilst developing a strong sense of responsibility and citizenship. This prepares them well for life after school.

The headteacher and senior staff have worked tirelessly to maintain good teaching and develop a curriculum which meets pupils' individual needs. In the main, this has been successful. Regular assessments of pupils' work provide an accurate picture of how well they are doing. This information is used very well to provide targeted support for those who need extra help with their learning and to set challenging end of year targets which pupils clearly understand. Occasionally, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough, resulting in good rather than outstanding progress overall. For example, despite pupils demonstrating their ability to write at length in one lesson, development is restricted in the next by use of worksheets, which require them to enter no more than one or two words. This is further compounded when subjects such as history, geography and religious education are not used to their full extent as vehicles for pupils to put into practice their literacy and numeracy skills.

Very positive partnerships between pupils, families, staff and other agencies provide a strong basis for learning which makes a good contribution to community cohesion within and beyond the school community. Family learning initiatives and a range of visits and visitors enrich the curriculum and contribute well to racial and social harmony.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision in the EYFS is good. Children enter Nursery with skills and knowledge below those typical of three-year-olds. Skills in communication and calculation are particularly low. Children make good progress and enter Year 1 with average standards except in literacy and calculation which remain below average. Children thoroughly enjoy a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities. Effective planning provides a balanced programme for children to choose activities and to work on tasks that are led by an adult. Teachers and support staff intervene successfully to maximise the learning potential in free play activities. In Reception classes, regular and effective assessments of children's progress are used skilfully by staff to build upon children's interests and to provide them with challenging problem-solving tasks. Children's personal and social skills are very effectively promoted, and as a result, they quickly become happy, confident and independent learners who achieve well. Outstanding attention to children's welfare begins with home visits before children begin Nursery and continues with a highly effective partnership between staff and parents. Leadership and management of the EYFS are good. However, in the current period of transition, this is having a greater impact in Reception classes where the EYFS leader acts as an excellent role model of good practice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to use their basic literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve well. On entry to Year 1, most pupils are working at the levels expected for their age overall, although their skills in literacy and calculation remain below average. Good progress in these key skills in Key Stage 1 results in standards by the end of Year 2 which are consistently in line with the national average. This good progress continues in Years 3 and 4. Consequently, standards by the time pupils leave the school have risen year-on-year and are now above those expected for pupils of this age.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school's caring ethos is helping pupils to become mature and responsible citizens who have a clear understanding of right and wrong. From an early age they cooperate very well and are courteous. Older pupils take pleasure in being helpful and caring for the younger ones. Pupils' awareness and understanding of other cultures is enriched by opportunities to celebrate a variety of religious festivals and through visits and visitors. Pupils keep healthy by developing an excellent understanding of the need for a balanced diet and the importance of exercise. They feel very safe in school and can talk with maturity about how to keep themselves safe both at school and outside. Attendance is good for the majority of pupils. They enjoy school very much. In response to how things could be made even better, a five-year-old said 'It's lovely just the way it is.' The school offers pupils many opportunities for teamwork, to exercise responsibility and

to express opinions. For example, the work of the school council contributes effectively to decisions about school life. Pupils are growing in confidence in making suggestions through the pupil perception surveys. One suggestion with regard to addressing bullying was the need to 'be careful with your body language as it can send out aggressive messages'. Excellent behaviour, positive attitudes and caring relationships with others within the school community and beyond create a happy atmosphere that contributes considerably to pupils' achievements. As a result, pupils are well-prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good. Teachers have well organised classroom routines and their management of pupils' behaviour is excellent. Classroom displays are attractive and interactive and are used effectively to support learning. Resources, including interactive whiteboards, are used imaginatively to engage pupils and to help them learn. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and how best to teach them. Pupils know their targets and have opportunities to talk about their work with their peers. Questioning is used effectively to assess understanding and to extend thinking. Pupils are made aware of how to improve their work because of the constructive feedback they receive. Skilled assistants provide additional and effective support for pupils who find learning hard. Consequently, they enjoy learning and they grow in confidence because they experience success. Planning is detailed and in most lessons there is a close match of work to the full range of abilities. However, teachers are not always consistent in their expectation of what pupils can achieve on a day-to-day basis or across classes within year groups. This is one of the key reasons why pupils' achievement is good but not yet outstanding.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. A strong focus on personal development from entry to Nursery through to Year 4 ensures that pupils develop independence and become keen learners; this contributes significantly to pupils' good achievement. The curriculum is carefully planned to enable all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to progress in their learning. There is a clear focus on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. However, although pupils do at times apply these skills in other subjects, this is not yet consistent. The use of pre-printed sheets in subjects such as history, geography and religious education narrows the opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills. The curriculum is enriched with a wide variety of visits and visitors to the school. In particular, the links with the construction company who are building the new school provide very valuable learning experiences for the pupils. Activities after school, although limited this year because of the construction work, have a high take-up and contribute well to pupils' health and enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's outstanding care, guidance and support enable pupils to be successful learners. Staff have a very keen awareness of the needs of all pupils and work hard to ensure that they are happy, safe and secure and receive a range of very effective support. Pupils with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the support provided by highly skilled adults and outstanding links with parents and outside agencies. Child protection procedures are clearly set out and understood by staff and arrangements for safeguarding pupils fulfil statutory requirements. Pupils' progress is meticulously tracked and they know exactly what they have to do to improve their work. Since the last inspection an improvement in the academic guidance provided for pupils is playing a significant role in raising standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Exceptional leadership and management by the headteacher, fully and effectively supported by senior staff and governors, ensures that standards continue to rise year-on-year. Rigorous systems for tracking pupils' progress ensure that pupils who have barriers to their learning are quickly identified and provided with sensitive well targeted support. In this way all pupils are helped to make good academic progress and develop excellent personal skills. Through highly effective systems of self-evaluation leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and a clear plan to bring about improvement. In view of the extent of school reorganisation, a sensible pace of change has been established. This allows new initiatives to become firmly established and the impact on pupils' achievement to be measured before taking the next step on the road to improvement. This is the key reason why this outstanding level of leadership and management has not yet resulted in outstanding provision overall. Nevertheless, the school has come a long way and has demonstrated an excellent capacity to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

1 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blyth Newsham First School, Northumberland, NE24 4NX

Thank you for the welcome you gave to the inspection team when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and seeing how much you contribute to the life of the school. We agree with you that your school provides you with a good education. The care the school provides for you to be happy and healthy is outstanding. Your personal development is excellent. It was good to see how well you behave and get along together. Your school council and safety committee representatives are to be congratulated on how they help to make your school a better place.

Your parents and carers told us what a fabulous job the headteacher and staff do in leading and managing the school, and we agree. They work very hard to make sure that the school keeps on improving. We have asked them to do two things to help with this. We would like the school to find more ways of helping you to use your literacy and numeracy skills when you are learning other subjects. Also, because you are now doing so well, we have asked the school to have even higher expectations of what you can achieve in lessons.

I am confident that you will help with this by coming to school regularly and always trying your best.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector