

Acklington Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122270
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314254
Inspection date	3 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Sheridan

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Yvonne Vickers
Headteacher	Mrs Suzanne Connolly and Mrs Nichola Brannen
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Acklington Morpeth Northumberland NE65 9BW
Telephone number	01670 760335
Fax number	0

Age group	4–9
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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; aspects of pupils' personal development and well-being; provision in the Foundation Stage and the impact of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the scrutiny of the school's data; brief observations of lessons; discussions with staff, governors and pupils; scrutiny of pupils' work, school documents and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluation of these was not justified.

Description of the school

Acklington Church of England Controlled First School is a very small school situated in Warkworth in Northumberland. The school is led by two headteachers who both work part-time and share responsibility for the school. All of the pupils at the school speak English as their first language and no pupils are from minority ethnic groups. No pupils have a statement of special educational need and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The number of pupils who are eligible for a free school meal is above the national average. The school has been awarded the Healthy School Award and Sportsmark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Acklington Church of England Controlled First School is a good school. Pupils are well cared for and thrive in a supportive environment that is at the centre of its community. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the impact the school has on the lives of their children. They appreciate that staff are friendly and that pupils are known individually. One parent said, 'My son looks forward to coming to school and is a very happy boy. What more could a mother want?' This view was typical of many.

Pupils achieve well and standards at the end of Year 4 are above age-related expectations in reading, writing and maths. Standards at the end of Year 2 are generally above average with most children achieving expected levels or higher. When pupils start school, their skills and experiences are generally in line with expectations for their age although a wide range of starting points are evident. Inspection evidence, including scrutiny of work in books, shows that pupils are making at least expected progress with a significant number making above average gains each year. This represents good progress overall.

A family atmosphere exists within the school and pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. Pupils are aware of the needs of others and look out for each other. Individuals relate well to each other and work well together. Pupils say that their teachers expect them to become independent and to learn from their mistakes. Pupils become more mature as they move through the school. They work, play and make decisions with increasing independence. Pupils have a very good sense of right and wrong, and older children ably support younger members of the school community in developing their moral compass. Behaviour is good, especially in Key Stage 2 and this is a further example of how pupils conduct themselves with an increasing maturity and independence in school. Pupils say that the reward scheme in school encourages positive behaviour and helps them to remember to do the right thing.

Attendance is outstanding. For the last two years, attendance has been well above the national average which is remarkable when considering the impact of one pupil's absence on overall percentages in a very small school. Pupils say they enjoy being at school.

Pupils adopt good healthy lifestyles. Every pupil has a water bottle in school and they know that water is important to maintaining their health and well-being. One pupil reflected on how water helped her concentrate better in the afternoon. Fruit is provided daily to all pupils. School dinners meet the requirements for healthy meals and the proportion of pupils who have a school dinner is very high. Pupils regularly take part in exercise in school. A good range of sports clubs and in school activities are provided and very well attended by pupils of all ages within the school. Pupils enjoy using a good range of outdoor equipment that encourages activity at break times.

The curriculum is good. Pupils at the school were consulted when the curriculum was reorganised. As a result, the curriculum is developed around themes that have been chosen to be exciting and relevant to pupils. The curriculum encourages the development of literacy and numeracy skills across a range of experiences and subjects. There is a strong focus on practising basic skills across a broad and balanced curriculum. A good range of activities enrich the curriculum. Pupils are eager to talk about trips, visits and special occasions and how these bring learning alive. Pupils say that they enjoy their learning a great deal.

Teaching is good overall although there is some teaching that is satisfactory. Where good teaching is seen, teachers have planned activities that develop pupils' skills using interesting

subject matter that captures their attention. In these lessons, planning takes into account the full range of learning needs and interests in mixed aged classes. Questioning is well focused so that pupils are able to contribute at their own level and all pupils stay involved and active.

Where teaching is satisfactory, work is less well matched to the wide range of learners' needs and abilities. Because of this, pupils are not as involved in whole-class sessions and make progress that is satisfactory rather than good. Nevertheless, they continue to work conscientiously, particularly in Key Stage 2. The marking of pupils' work is good. Pupils are given clear guidance about where they have been successful and what they need to do to improve their work. Verbal feedback is given to younger pupils. This helps them focus on the specific areas that they need to develop. Older pupils understand the marking in their books and, as a result, make improvements to their work. Targets are effective in helping pupils focus on important areas for development in Key Stage 2. Pupils know these and understand how they can improve their work.

The school is led by two headteachers who both work part-time and share responsibility for the school. The headteachers share a common vision for the school and have successfully identified the school's strengths and areas for development.

School improvement is good and parents, staff and governors say that the pace of improvement brought about by the leadership team has had a positive impact on outcomes for pupils. The headteachers work closely together so that leadership and development planning are shared effectively. However, there is scope for clarification over management responsibilities to ensure that all functions are completed in a timely fashion and that nothing is repeated unnecessarily.

Governance is good. The governing body know the school well. They hold the school to account and provide support appropriately. The chair of governors has a good working relationship with the headteachers and regularly provides support and challenge. Governors individually hold positions of responsibility and fulfil these effectively. Several governors regularly get involved with activities in school, including the popular weekly gardening club.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the school has a good capacity for further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children in the Reception class are part of the Key Stage 1 class and, for parts of the week, are taught alongside the whole school. Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy their education. They benefit from the family atmosphere and support from older pupils who make good role models. Children behave well and become confident learners. A range of visitors enhance the curriculum and, through this, children develop a sense of the wider world.

Work is planned for their needs and abilities so they make satisfactory progress towards early learning goals. All areas of learning are covered and children have some opportunity for imaginative play. However, child-initiated activities are limited. The outdoor area of the classroom is underdeveloped and there are too few opportunities to learn and play independently outside. Areas in the classroom are not sufficiently well organised for pupils to explore and initiate their own activities successfully.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop opportunities for child-initiated learning and play, both inside and outdoors, within the Foundation Stage.
- Ensure that management responsibilities are designated so all functions of headship are shared appropriately between the two headteachers.

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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	3
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	1
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	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

4 July 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Ackinton Church of England First School, Northumberland, NE65 9BW

You may recall that I came to inspect your school recently. This letter is to let you know what my judgements are.

Your school is a good school. You make good progress in your learning and you told me that you enjoy the range of activities that your teachers arrange for you. Some of you told me about how teachers encourage you to learn from your mistakes and this helps you to become more mature and independent. This was a really interesting observation and I know that your teachers were pleased that you felt this. I could see that you work, play and support each other with increasing maturity as you move through the school. I was impressed with how older children in your school help and support younger children in activities like gardening club and at lunch time. Your school has a good atmosphere because everyone knows each other and you get on very well indeed.

I have asked the school to develop two areas to help make it even better.

- I have asked your teachers to look at ways of allowing the youngest children in your school to choose and develop more of their own activities and to learn more often outside.
- Your school is quite special because it has two headteachers. I have asked them to make sure they both know who is going to do what so that everything gets done without either of them having too much to do.

I would like to finish by saying thank you to all of you who talked to me during the day. I found you to be polite, friendly and very proud of your school.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Michael Sheridan

Lead inspector