

Ellingham Church of England Aided First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122289
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314259
Inspection date	27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Oglesby

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Andrea Thomas
Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Dickinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2003
School address	Ellingham Chathill Northumberland NE67 5ET
Telephone number	01665 589233
Fax number	01665 589233

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This much smaller than average school, is set in open countryside near the Northumbrian coast. Its pupils travel from several communities and come from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Year groups are small. The largest is currently 13 and the smallest five. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased recently and is now average. An average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. All pupils are White British. The headteacher has recently been asked to lead another small school. She divides her time between the two 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. The headteacher, staff and governors work together very well to live up to the school's motto, 'A small school with a big heart'. They include and value everyone and make sure all can succeed. Consequently, pupils love coming to school and say they enjoy every day. Attendance is above average. Pupils' personal development and the quality of the curriculum are outstanding. Standards of care, guidance and support are good.

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Children make good progress because the teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers often have a wide range of ability in their groups and they are good at planning work which challenges everyone, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Since the previous inspection, the rate of progress for the more able pupils has improved. Lessons are often exciting and fun. There is a good balance of listening, discussing and doing. Consequently pupils concentrate and work hard. The school gives a high priority to helping pupils to become independent learners. Even the youngest children are expected to think about how well they are learning, work responsibly and make good decisions. Teachers provide useful opportunities for pupils to explore and try things for themselves. Occasionally, these activities lack the pace and purpose of the teacher-led sessions. This is because teachers do not always make clear the reason for the work or the quality expected.

Pupils are learning what is needed to stay healthy and safe. They have been enthusiastically involved in gaining the 'Eco School Award.' There are plenty of opportunities for physical exercise and pupils have expert health advice from visitors such as the District Nurse. The school has an effective programme for personal and social education; this is reflected in daily routines, for example through the work of the playground friends. They gain a great deal, in self esteem and social skills, from the outstanding links with other schools and the community and are very proud of their parts in recent performances and village events.

The curriculum is outstanding and is constantly being improved. The school sees its rich programme of events, visits and visitors as part of the drive to raise standards, not as mere extras or treats. For example, pupils practised a range of reading, writing, speaking and computer skills in preparing for their Fair Trade presentation. These were brought together in a confident multimedia presentation which enthralled 200 delegates at the diocesan conference. This was one of several experiences which prompted a parent to write, 'The children have a great many opportunities both within and beyond the curriculum'.

Central to the school's many successes and high local reputation is effective leadership and management at all levels. Inspiring leadership by the headteacher has resulted in a united and hard working team who are determined to improve further. Morale is high. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. The well-informed and effective governing body is closely involved in all areas of the school's work. The school's evaluation of its performance is accurate and self-critical. It sets demanding targets and often surpasses them. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The school is well placed to improve further and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage. They enter school with a wide range of skills, but good teaching and teamwork ensures that activities are well matched to their age and ability. Provision has been strengthened recently by a part-time Nursery class. These children work alongside the Reception year in the morning, while the Reception children work with pupils in Year 1 after lunch. Staff make good, flexible use of this arrangement to provide a variety of interesting activities. Effective teaching assistants, as well as volunteers, make a significant contribution. The school keeps in close touch with parents, who appreciate the care for each child's happiness and well-being. Older pupils are considerate and helpful around school and at lunchtime. There are good arrangements to help new pupils settle.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve learning further by ensuring that pupil's independent activities have the same clarity and sense of purpose as those which are teacher-led.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in all parts of the school. Standards are above average. Children enter school with a wide range of skills and each one makes good progress in the Foundation Stage, from their various starting points. Nearly all reach the expected learning goals before they enter Year 1, and some go beyond these. They continue to make good progress in Years 1 to 4, because the teaching is consistently good and pupils want to improve. Pupils in Year 2 are working at an above average level for their age.

These findings broadly match the results in the national tests. Pupils in Year 2 have reached higher than expected levels for several years. National comparisons have to be interpreted with some caution, because some year groups have as few as five pupils. Nevertheless, the school's own assessments show that pupils make good progress, against their prior attainment, by the end of Year 4. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieve well. This is not only due to all that the school provides, but also the sensitive support and encouragement they receive from other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and are keen to learn. They listen, work hard and behave very well. This is because they feel valued, the school has high expectations and there are exemplary relationships between all members of the school community. Attendance is above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have many opportunities, including their popular and lively collective worship, to share feelings and think about their place in the world. Pupils are gaining an awareness of other cultures through visits, visitors and literature, for example in the successful 'Read to Feed' project. Pupils are proud of their eco award and becoming a Fair Trade School.

Pupils say that their opinions and ideas are listened to. One parent went further, 'Children are encouraged to ask questions in a safe, loving environment. There is always time to talk and

many ears to listen! Pupils contribute outstandingly well to the school and wider community, for example through the weekly community lunches, charity events and the village festival.

Pupils develop an awareness of the importance of safety, have an understanding of what constitutes a healthy life and enjoy a good amount of exercise. They leave Ellingham with good basic skills, positive attitudes to learning and confident social skills. Pupils here are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good in all classes and is sometimes outstanding. This is the main reason for the pupils' good achievement. They like and respect their teachers and try hard to please them. Secure relationships with all the adults give pupils the confidence to ask and answer questions without fear of failure. Consequently, lessons are lively and interesting, with pupils busy and involved. Just occasionally, progress slows when a task does not involve or challenge sufficiently, particularly when pupils are asked to work on their own. Teachers' explanations are clear and short, often using the interactive whiteboards effectively to help pupils understand. They make good use of their knowledge of each pupil's progress to match work to their particular needs. Teachers encourage them to think about the quality of their own work and how it could be improved. This is particularly effective in the Year 3/4 class, where the teacher gives clear advice on the quality and work-rate expected. Teaching assistants and volunteers make an important contribution to learning, particularly in helping pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum is better than the school judges it to be. Strengths are in the efforts made to meet the needs of all pupils, the emphasis on learning through worthwhile and practical experiences, and the exceptional enrichment activities for such a small school. There is a good emphasis on the basic skills of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). These skills are then put to good use in other subjects. For example the impressive work on 'In the Steps of the Northern Saints' involved visits, research, and interviews as well as writing and computer work. All this was brought together in a presentation on DVD which motivated pupils to make even more effort.

The school takes every opportunity to add to the curriculum. Pupils talk about their many and varied visits, opportunities to perform in drama and music and to join in sports. These activities contribute much to their social skills and awareness of healthy and safe living.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are systems in place for child protection and for safety in school. Pupils are well supervised and feel looked after at all times of the school day. They are confident that adults will deal with their concerns. The headteacher, staff and governors cooperate well to care for pupils who are vulnerable or causing concern. The school keeps parents well informed. Several of

them wrote to say how much they appreciated this. 'The staff are friendly and approachable, they welcome parents' involvement and handle any worries quickly and effectively.'

The school has thorough procedures to monitor each pupil's progress. These are shared with learners, who feel they receive helpful advice and encouragement. The older pupils enjoy their regular 'tutorials' where progress is reviewed and new targets set. Guidance to younger children on how to improve their work is satisfactory. There is good support for children when they join the school. Strong links with the middle schools help to prepare pupils for the next stage.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides caring and astute leadership which is clearly focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development of all the pupils. She is ably supported by Local Authority and the school's leadership team, including some who have recently joined the school. The security of this teamwork ensures that the effectiveness of the school is not adversely affected by the headteacher's attention to two schools. Systems of self evaluation are accurate and self critical and take into account the views of parents, pupils, staff and governors. All adults feel part of a hard working and effective team who are determined to provide the best possible care and education for the pupils. Leaders have good systems to check the quality of teaching and how effectively the curriculum is working. Governors are frequent and welcome visitors. They make an effective contribution to the work of the school, holding it to account when needed and providing knowledgeable support in areas such as finance.

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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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well 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 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?	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	1
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

28 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ellingham Church of England Aided First School, Northumberland, NE67 5ET

As you know, I visited your school recently for one day. I am writing to thank you for being so helpful, welcoming and polite. I enjoyed my visit very much and I still have my invitation to the King's party at Alnwick Castle!

I think that you are all very lucky to be at Ellingham. It is a good school. You are making good progress because you work hard and concentrate. Everyone seems to get along exceptionally well, one of you told me that this is a great school to make friends, I'm sure he is right. I enjoyed the lessons, as you do, and the way teachers work so hard to make the work interesting. One boy kept telling me, 'It's not all pen and paper here'. It certainly isn't!

You also have lots of chances to go out and work with other people. I'm glad you make the most of them. For such a small school you have a lot of talented adults working with you, this is one of the reasons you are doing so well. I know you enjoy all the clubs, visits, visitors and special events in school. So do your parents!

To make your learning even better, your school is going to help you with your independent tasks, when adults are working with other groups. Just now and then I thought that you could have done more. You certainly know how to concentrate and work hard; I saw this in every class.

Best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Keith Oglesby

Lead inspector