

North Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132172
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	315951
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Neil Foster
Headteacher	Mrs Christine Clough
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2004
School address	Bessemer Green Spennymoor County Durham DL16 6PP
Telephone number	01388 815943
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average size primary school. The locality it serves has high levels of social and economic deprivation. A large proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average, as is the proportion with a statement for special educational need. Almost all pupils have a White British heritage. None learn English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides its pupils with a good education. The headteacher, ably assisted by her leadership team, provides clear educational direction to the school's work. Together, all staff successfully promote the school's values of care and consideration, and foster the philosophy that every child does matter. Good teaching, a good curriculum, and effective care, guidance and support ensure this is a very inclusive school. The school forges effective partnerships with nearby schools, the local authority, the health service and with parents to support pupils' well-being effectively. Almost all parents have full confidence in the school and value the information they receive about their children's progress. One parent's comments sum up their views. 'Since coming to North Park my child has improved in all areas particularly literacy. He is much more confident in everything he does. His teacher in particular has been very helpful and approachable throughout the year ...'

From starting school with skills that are very low pupils' accomplishments reflect good achievement and personal development by the time they leave the school. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and good progress through Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards in Key Stage 1 are now broadly average overall and have improved from 2007 when teachers' assessments were below average. Boys' standards, however, remain well below those of girls, especially in reading and writing. Results in the 2007 Year 6 national tests were broadly average in mathematics and science and below average in English. Pupils with learning difficulties did as well as their counterparts nationally. Few pupils gained the higher levels possible in English and science. The school has acted promptly to tackle this issue. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to reach broadly average standards in all subjects this year, with more poised to gain higher levels in English and science.

Pupils are well behaved in lessons, and act safely and sensibly in and out of doors. They are considerate, confident and polite to adults. They enjoy school and work industriously. They are delighted when they do well and happily share the success of others. The school rigorously monitors absence but, despite prompt action, attendance stubbornly remains a little below average. Pupils have a good grasp of the need for healthy eating and many take part enthusiastically in physical activities. They contribute well in many ways to their school and wider community. Effective transition arrangements, well developed social skills and sound basic skills ensure pupils are well prepared for their future.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The leadership team and governing body have successfully fostered key improvements to raise standards. Good progress has been made since the last inspection especially in raising standards in science and improving attendance. The school now sets challenging targets and is well placed to achieve them. The governing body is well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development. The school accurately identifies priorities for raising achievement and the actions taken have resulted in rising standards. However, in the school's improvement plan it is not always clear how success is to be measured. Nevertheless, the school is clear about the way ahead and with the improving picture has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When children join the Nursery, their skills and abilities are very low compared with those typical for their age. Parents are very appreciative of the way their children settle quickly and enjoy school. As a result of a strong emphasis on personal and social development in the Nursery, children develop confidence and quickly learn to follow classroom routines. Some teaching is good, for example in fostering physical development in the Nursery, and phonics work to develop spelling and writing in Reception. The extensive indoor and outdoor facilities offer children a wide range of experience. At times, though, the balance of activities, especially outdoors, is tipped too far in favour of child-initiated play compared with those directed or supported by adults. Children make only satisfactory progress through the Foundation Stage in part because of the way the Nursery and Reception classes often work separately rather than being fully coordinated. Of particular note is that children's development in communication, language and mathematics is notably much slower in the Nursery than in Reception. By the end of the Reception year, a minority reach all the learning goals expected for their age. However, standards remain well below those expected, especially in communication, language and literacy and to a lesser extent in mathematical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop greater coordination of provision to improve standards and progress throughout the Foundation Stage.
- Raise boys' standards in Key Stage 1 in reading, and especially in writing.
- Make it clear how success is to be measured in the school's improvement plan.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6.

Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2007 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Current standards supported by early indications of teachers' assessments indicate an improvement and are now broadly average. Notably, this year more pupils reached the highest level, Level 3, in all three subjects. Progress is good and pupils exceed expectations taking into account their low standards at the beginning of Year 1. Boys are starting in Year 1 with lower levels than girls and although their standards in reading and writing were noticeably lower they have made good progress.

Pupils make good progress through Years 3 to 6. A year-on-year rise in standards in all subjects is reflected in the 2007 Key Stage 2 results of national tests which were average, and stronger in mathematics and science than in English. The provisional assessments for this year indicate more pupils are on track to gain the expected standards in English, mathematics and science. Notably, the school's assessments show boys are progressing as well as girls, and that pupils with learning difficulties, or who are more able and talented, are making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development reflects their good relationships with other pupils and with adults. They have a good understanding of each other's feelings and work well together. Many

opportunities foster their good moral and social development, and extend their awareness of local and world-wide cultures. Fewer opportunities mean their spiritual development is satisfactory, rather than good. The school successfully promotes pupils' well-being. Pupils know how to look after themselves. They demonstrate a good knowledge of the importance of keeping fit and healthy and are keen to take part in physical activities during and after school. Pupils say they feel safe and the school is free from bullying; they point to the marked decline in bullying since the buddy initiative began at the start of the year. Pupils clearly enjoy school and are very positive about the varied activities arranged for them. Attendance is a little below average. Pupils behave well in lessons and considerately around the school. They very willingly take on responsibilities, for example as school councillors or playground buddies. They contribute well to school life; the popular dance club was the idea of some keen and expert pupils, and is led by them. Pupils readily help both the local and wider community through charitable work. Their competent basic skills and good social development prepare them well for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and promotes learning well. Teachers and teaching assistants form strong teams and plan well together. Most lessons are well organised with interesting activities, such as the teacher's imaginative use of music to stimulate Year 4 pupils to think of exciting and adventurous words when writing. Questions are used well. A new writing initiative is helping raise standards by successfully promoting speaking and listening skills in all Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 classes. In some classrooms new technologies, such as hand held computers, are effectively used to support learning, especially to motivate boys to write well. Teachers make clear to pupils what they will learn. In turn, they respond well to their teachers' and teaching assistants' expectations and targets for them. Increasingly teacher's are helping pupils to understand know how to improve their work. This is evident, for example when they make evaluative when marking pupils' books.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of activities which effectively promote and encourage all pupils to become successful and confident learners. A number of awards, including the national Healthy Schools Award, Information and Communication Technology awards, the Activemark and Artsmark Gold reflect the quality, breadth and balance of pupils' experiences. The school is making the curriculum more relevant and exciting by combining different subject areas into themes with opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills clearly identified. An extensive range of visitors to school and educational visits enrich the curriculum. The many voluntary activities held after school are well attended. These, and the enjoyment of a residential trip away from home, greatly enhance pupils' social and cultural development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from good care, guidance and support. The atmosphere in the school is one of welcome, care and purpose, and stems from the conscientious way staff promote the welfare of their pupils and help them enjoy school. Good arrangements for pupils' emotional support

work well. Very good procedures ensure children settle quickly into school, and that they are well prepared for a smooth transition to secondary education. Secure procedures safeguard children with thorough routines for child protection, and health and safety being fully in place. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very effective support which helps them make good progress. The school diligently and rigorously collects information about pupils' standards each term to track their overall progress, and to set them challenging targets. Teachers use the information well and overall progress is good..

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership maintains a clear sense of direction, ensuring that the education and welfare of pupils are always the school's priority. A strong collaborative approach is evident within the leadership team. Leaders regularly and thoroughly monitor what is happening in school. As a result, they have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards. The school sets itself challenging targets and in 2008 early indications are the school is on course to meet them. The school's plan for improvement identifies the correct priorities and actions taken are starting to raise standards as seen in the higher results in national tests. The plan does not always make it clear how success will be measured difficult. The governing body receives comprehensive reports which ensure it is well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development. They know their next step is to extend their role in direct monitoring. Governors are highly supportive of the headteacher and her staff, and are confident to ask challenging questions about the school.

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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	3
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	3
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	3
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

7 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of North Park Primary School, Durham, DL16 9PP

Mr Horne and I really enjoyed our recent visit to inspect your school. Thank you for helping us when we came into your classrooms and assembly to see you at work. We did enjoy talking with those of you whom we met. You were very polite and helpful. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and especially to hear how you like to take part in activities during and after school, and how you value the friendships you make. You are well behaved and considerate to others in lessons, around the building and on the playground. We were pleased to see how your school council and roles as buddies contribute to school life and how, through your charitable work, you help others who are less fortunate than you. I know the headteacher and all the staff are rightly very proud of you.

Your school gives you a good education. It is warm and welcoming. All the adults in the school look after you well and that is why you feel safe and happy. Last year many children in the Foundation Stage made satisfactory progress. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 made good progress but, last year and this, boys in Year 2 have not done as well as the girls. Also last year, there were not as many high grades as there should have been in English or science in the Year 6 tests everyone has to do. This year results are expected to be higher than last year and better in all subjects. When we looked at your books we saw how teachers tell you how well you are doing and give you pointers to improve.

I have asked the school to help children in the Foundation Stage to do better, and to help boys in Years 1 and 2 catch up with their reading and writing. I have also asked the school to make sure all its development plans are having the desired effect on your progress.

You have many opportunities at North Park Primary School to learn about life and these will stand you in good stead for the future. Some of you will soon be moving on to secondary schools. We hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector