

Ayresome Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133659
Local Authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	316181
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Farrow HMI

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	560
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Toase
Headteacher	Mr Trevor Hutchinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2004
School address	Worcester Street Middlesbrough TS1 4NT
Telephone number	01642 244961
Fax number	01642 801100

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ayresome is significantly larger than the average sized primary school. It is situated in central Middlesbrough, in an area that experiences very high levels of social and economic disadvantage; consequently nearly half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Almost half of the pupils come from minority ethnic communities and a quarter these pupils are in the early stages of developing English. The proportion of pupils deemed to have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, whilst the proportion with a statement of special educational need is below average. A significant number of families move in and out of the area regularly. As a result, a much higher number of pupils than usual join or leave the school at various times throughout the school year. A new headteacher has been appointed to the school since the last inspection. The school has achieved the Artsmark Silver Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ayresome Primary is a satisfactory school with strengths that include the good quality care and support provided to pupils and the recent developments in key skills and the creative curriculum that are enriching the satisfactory curriculum. These aspects of the school's work promote pupils' good personal development, build their self-esteem and enable an increasing majority of pupils to enjoy their time in school; as evidenced, for example, in the improving level of attendance, which is now satisfactory.

Ayresome is a happy and inclusive school where pupils of many nationalities work together in harmony. Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire are overwhelmingly positive about the school and whilst a small proportion believes that behaviour is an issue, inspectors found pupils to be well behaved in classes and when moving through the school. Although pupils' behaviour on the playground is sometimes boisterous they are well supervised and any conflicts are quickly resolved.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are deeply committed to improving the life chances of children in Ayresome school, no matter how short their time in the school may be. They are steadfast in their dedication to develop a creative, nurturing, learning and achieving school. They have established a sense of stability and renewed vitality within the school, through which they are securing much needed improvement. Their enthusiasm is infectious and fully embraced by middle managers, governors and the majority of staff.

Senior managers are working hard to improve all aspects of the school's work in order to tackle the significant barriers to learning some children face and address the historic trend of underachievement in the school. They have secured the support of the local authority and together have implemented strategies to accelerate the rate of improvement across the school. They are beginning to see success in this endeavour, particularly in Key Stage 2 where standards are below average, but rising.

Pupils enter school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are well below those expected for their age. Despite a good start in Nursery, pupils do not catch up from their low skill levels on entry by the end of Key Stage 1. Accurate and regular tracking information indicates that pupils are making better progress this year at both key stages and the majority of pupils are now making satisfactory progress given their starting points. However, the school knows that standards in English mathematics and science need to be better. Good, early identification of the needs of, and support for, pupils with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to make at least similar and sometime better rates of progress than that of their peers.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Often, teaching is good and some is outstanding, but it is not consistently good enough across the school to fully redress the low levels of attainment on entry. Teachers' use of information about pupils' performance is good and informs lesson planning effectively. However, some teachers lack sufficient ambition on behalf of their pupils and consequently, although improving, progress is not always as good as it could be, particularly for middle and higher ability pupils. In a minority of classes, teaching is mundane, uninspiring and pitched at too low a level so that pupils do not learn as quickly as they could; this inevitably hinders the rate of progress they can make. Despite this, pupils remain focused on their work and behave well.

The school celebrates the rich variety of cultures within the school community and this adds to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They work well with a wide range of agencies to ensure pupils are supported in times of need. This is particularly the case for the most vulnerable pupils in the school where staff go the extra mile to provide the right support. The investment in a parent support adviser has helped to build bridges with, and provide support to pupils and their families, and the school is keen to further develop effective partnerships with parents by providing, for example, more family learning opportunities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Whilst the leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher are good, they know there are still areas of the school's work they need to improve. Middle managers work with senior staff to monitor the quality of teaching and learning rigorously. However, this information is not yet used effectively to identify what needs to be done to hasten the pace of learning in some lessons, or to share the good practice clearly evident in the school. So, although managers know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well, the evaluation of particular initiatives is not always based on a sufficiently critical analysis of all the good data and information the school has to hand. This means it is difficult to evaluate the impact of actions taken to improve, and priorities for improvement are not always clear in terms of the difference they will make. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are taking determined action to improve the effectiveness of self-evaluation so that, as a consequence, the quality of education provided is consistently good and enables all pupils to achieve their best. For example, restructuring of leadership responsibilities has made it easier for middle managers and senior managers to be involved together in agreeing priorities for improvement, after more closely evaluating the work of the school.

The school has addressed the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection effectively. This, together with the current rate of improvement in pupils' progress, indicates the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Since the last inspection, and with good support from the local authority, improvements have been made to the Foundation Stage and it now provides children with a sound start to their education. Children enter the Nursery with a range of knowledge and experiences but overall their skills are well below the expectations for children of their age. For many, attending the Nursery is their first experience of learning outside the home and while many children enter the nursery at a very early stage of learning English they quickly grow in confidence and make good progress. Children in the nursery enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities both indoors and outdoors. Teachers' planning is increasingly well focused on promoting learning through interesting, exciting and relevant activities. Separate outdoor play areas for the Nursery and Reception classes have been developed to a very high standard and are having a positive impact on all aspects of learning.

Provision in the Reception classes has also improved since the last inspection. Staff plan a wide range of activities that are mostly appropriate for their age. They devise interesting ways to stimulate and involve children but do not always design these to sustain their interest or to promote further exploration. Assessment procedures are in place but the school knows they are still not good enough and have taken action to improve them. While there is some challenge for more able children, this is not always sustained. Free access to writing materials helps children to practise their skills, although many do not attain the expected levels by the end of the Foundation Stage. Whilst the children make good progress overall, by the time they enter

Year 1 they are still working at levels below those expected especially in communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Raise teachers' expectations to ensure all pupils are challenged to achieve the best they can.
- Ensure the good data and information the school holds about its performance is effectively used to evaluate the impact of the work of the school and inform future priorities.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 have been well below average for a number of years and in 2007 were unsatisfactory. Inspection evidence indicates standards at Key Stage 1 are currently improving and whilst remaining below average, represent satisfactory progress given pupils' starting points in Nursery; particularly in reading. Since the last inspection, there has been a gradual improvement in standards attained by pupils in their external tests at the end of Key Stage 2. Whilst they still remain below the national average, the gap between the school and the national average is closing steadily. School performance data and information about pupils show a continuing improvement in 2008, and predict that a higher proportion of pupils will gain the expected level in their national tests than previously. School data and inspection evidence also show that Key Stage 2 pupils are making broadly satisfactory progress in their lessons and in the regular assessments they undertake.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they enjoy school and are proud of it. They have sensible attitudes to health issues and say they appreciate the healthy school lunches and the wide range of opportunities to take part in physical exercise, ranging from competitive sports to ballroom and street-dancing clubs. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection and is now generally good. The effective and consistent use of behaviour management strategies, improvements in the curriculum and in strategies to improve pupils' attendance are adding to pupils' enjoyment of, and engagement in school as well as the progress they make in lessons.

The school embraces the cultural diversity of the school community well. Pupils learn about other cultures and faiths in religious education lessons, through initiatives such as 'Godly Playroom' and the recent Interfaith Project which links them to schools throughout the North of England. The wide and often exciting range of educational visits also strengthens the social cohesion of the school. Older pupils thrive on taking on extra responsibilities, such as being peer mentors, acting as play leaders in the playground and representing their classmates as members of the school council. The school council meets regularly and works hard to seek the views of pupils. The school has acted upon many of their views and requests, for example by making a wider range of play opportunities available to pupils at break and lunchtimes. Pupils' contribution to the wider community is satisfactory and includes singing and dancing in venues

across the town and raising funds for charities during Red Nose Day and for Children in Need. Good transition arrangements assure they are well prepared for their secondary school. They have well developed personal and social skills and now make satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The atmosphere in classrooms is generally warm and positive. Teachers relate well to pupils and are kind and encouraging. Relationships are good. This helps to ensure that pupils are ready to learn and settle quickly into lessons. Clear planning, perceptive questioning, a brisk pace and good use of resources characterise those lessons that are good. In many lessons very good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) which the pupils can use most proficiently. Older pupils are fully involved in their own learning, demonstrating enthusiasm to achieve the targets set through their 'Going for Green' records of achievement. However, in some lessons, expectations are not high enough and there is a lack of appropriate challenge, especially for the middle and higher ability pupils. In these lessons pupils make slower progress and their enjoyment diminishes. Whilst marking is good overall there is a lack of consistency across the school so pupils do not always know how well they are doing and what they need to do next in their learning to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. It is broad and balanced in terms of the subjects offered but until recently it did not always ensure that all pupils developed their knowledge and skills in English, mathematics and science. A recent and positive feature is the development of Focus Groups who oversee the implementation of a more skills-based, thematic curriculum. For example, the whole school work on local saints is starting to increase children's motivation and enjoyment and links particularly well to literacy skills. To enhance learning further, the school has introduced a creative element which is having a very positive impact on pupils' attendance and personal development. Examples include the Street Dancing Club which has improved the self-esteem, attendance and interest in school for those boys who take part. Walls and corridors also display glimpses of the good range of creative activities that pupils can participate in and enjoy. These recent changes are also beginning to make a difference to pupils' progress in lessons but it is too early to measure their full impact. Outdoor and indoor facilities, especially for the Foundation Stage, and provision for ICT have been improved since the last inspection and are good. The curriculum is also enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, especially in the performing arts. Visitors to the school and visits to local places of historical and geographical interest, the theatre and to residential outdoor education centres all significantly add to pupils' enjoyment of being at school and learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are good and promote their personal development and well-being successfully. All safeguarding requirements are met. The school is a caring community where relationships between adults and pupils are good. Consequently,

pupils say they feel valued and safe. They report that incidents of misbehaviour or bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively and know to whom they can turn for advice. Parents are justifiably confident that their children are well cared for. The school is resolute and tenacious in its support for pupils who have learning difficulties and for those pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.

Good tracking and academic guidance systems are now being used to set more appropriately ambitious targets and plan for individual pupils' improvement. The recently introduced Records of Achievement ensure that most pupils now know their learning targets. When used properly, they inform pupils what they need to do to improve and have made a positive difference to pupils' attitudes to learning with one pupil testifying that, 'They're good because you know what you're aiming for'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Middle managers are well supported and say they relish the renewed focus on accountability for their team's impact on pupils' achievement. Good professional development opportunities nurture and develop staff competencies and leadership skills. Senior and middle managers have a satisfactory and increasingly accurate view of the school's performance and know its strengths and weaknesses well. However, a small minority of staff have yet to fully embrace responsibility for their own role in delivering the school's improvement priorities. The school improvement plan provides a clear rationale for the school's work and underpins the work of the school, but the plan includes insufficient milestones or clear targets against which progress can be measured.

Governors are effectively carrying out their role as critical friends in supporting and challenging the senior management team. They too know the strengths and weaknesses of the school through regular presentation of information and discussion in their meetings and visits to school. However, they are not yet fully involved in the strategic evaluation of the school's work or determination of the school's priorities for improvement. The finance manager's and finance committee's work assures robust financial management and the school provides satisfactory value for money. Significant improvements have been made to the fabric of this old Victorian school; pupils are respectful of and value the well resourced and decorated rooms and improved facilities now available.

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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?	3
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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	3
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	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ayresome Primary School, Middlesbrough, TS1 4NT

Thank you for making the inspection team and myself so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. It was good to talk to some of you and see your friendly faces and your good behaviour as we went into classes. I would like to thank the great number of your parents or carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire. A great majority think highly of your school. A small number think some of you do not behave well but we saw you were well behaved when we visited your classes and when we walked around the corridors.

We think Ayresome provides you with a satisfactory quality of education with strengths that include the care and support you are provided with, your behaviour and personal development, the leadership of Mr Hutchinson and Mrs Murray, and the creative and extra activities and visits in which you can take part.

The school has changed some of the ways that it works and this is helping you to make better progress in your learning, which is satisfactory. You like your 'Going for Green' books and where these are used well, you know exactly how well you are doing and strive to improve to colour your segments 'green' for success.

While we think that many of your lessons are good, they are not consistently good enough to ensure that you all make the best progress that you are capable of. We think some teachers do not give you work that challenges you enough. We also think, and the school knows this already, that the standards you attain in your tests in English, mathematics and science need to be better. In order to make that happen we have asked the senior managers to make sure that all teaching is good or better. We have also asked that they ensure the information they have about how well you are doing is used to help staff focus on what needs to happen to help you make good progress in your learning and attain high standards.

Once again thank you for making us welcome and being so friendly and well behaved. Well done! You are a testament to your school and on behalf of the team I wish you all well during the rest of your time in Ayresome School.

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector