

Hylton Castle Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108832
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	319426
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake HMI

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	318
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	Mr David Bilton
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Armstrong
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cramlington Road Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR5 3QL
Telephone number	0191 5535574
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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

Hylton Castle is a community primary school on the outskirts of Sunderland. Although the school is larger than average in size, with almost all its pupils of White British heritage, the number on roll has been decreasing in recent years. There is a significantly higher than average number of pupils entitled to free school meals, as there is for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Hylton Castle Primary School now provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. Although standards remain below average by the time the pupils leave the school in Year 6, the school is enabling the vast majority of its pupils to achieve satisfactorily in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

The children start in Nursery with levels of skills, knowledge and personal attributes lower than expected for their age. Children make satisfactory progress overall during the Early Years Foundation Stage, although their standards in early reading and writing are below those expected by the time they reach the start of Year 1. This is because of the ineffective teaching of phonics in the Reception year that enable the children to link sounds and letters more accurately.

The school has acted positively to address the issues raised in the previous inspection and has, in partnership with the local authority, developed effective systems for collecting and analysing pupil performance data, improved the provision for those pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and introduced more robust monitoring of teaching and learning. However, not all the improvement strategies have been entirely successful. For example, there is still some inadequate teaching, which is affecting standards and pupils' rate of progress. The senior managers and governors are aware of this, and are aiming to improve all teaching to at least good in almost all lessons. Current curricular provision is contributing to this aim, particularly the use of out-of-school visits to local and regional venues that link with work in the classroom.

There is a clear intention that all staff want the children to be safe, attend school regularly, and make the progress in their learning that is appropriate to their abilities. While the school is satisfactorily achieving these aims, there remain a significant number of parents who indicated to inspectors in the pre-inspection questionnaire that they would want senior leaders and managers to develop more effective liaison with parents, and that any issues raised are dealt with expediently. The school is aware of these concerns, but has yet to develop a successful strategy that addresses fully this issue. The school's commitment to regular exercise and healthy eating as part of promoting pupils' physical well-being has been recognised in its achieving national awards in these two areas. There are now increasing numbers of pupils involved in extra-curricular sport, and despite the vast majority of pupils showing good knowledge and understanding of the benefits of eating healthy foods, many have yet to embrace it fully as a lifestyle change.

Senior leaders and managers, including the governors, are working in a focused and positive way to embrace change and challenge underperformance and underachievement throughout the school. Improvements are being achieved in a number of management areas, but there remains a lot of work to do in order to raise standards and improve pupils' achievements in line with their own, their parents', and the school's aspirations. Currently, the capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is satisfactory. Children begin Nursery with knowledge, skills and personal attributes below those typical for their age. Children make satisfactory progress overall during the EYFS, although their standards in early reading and writing are below those expected by the time they reach the start of Year 1. This is because of ineffective teaching of phonics in the Reception year to enable the children to link sounds and letters more accurately. A high priority is given to developing positive attitudes through good personal, social and emotional provision, which is helping the children settle quickly, behave well and enjoy attending school. Throughout the EYFS, there is an increasing recognition of the need to give children increased opportunities to exercise more independence, choice and responsibility for their own learning. Work areas have been created in a way that allows the children to use their imagination, work alongside friends and learn valuable skills of tolerance and respect for the choices of others; these are helping the children to become happy and confident learners. Good teamwork and consistent procedures ensure that provision for children's welfare is satisfactory. Close monitoring of children's progress helps staff identify children's individual needs. However, not enough consideration is given to the level of challenge needed by those children who stay in Nursery for five terms. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Monitoring and analysis of the EYFS provision are also satisfactory, but currently underdeveloped in Reception.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- Raise standards in reading and writing in the EYFS by improving the teaching of phonics.
- Develop and implement further strategies for liaising with parents and responding to any of their concerns in a timely manner.
- Address inadequate teaching and improve the overall percentage of lessons that consistently reach at least a good or better standard.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

At the time of the previous inspection in July 2007, pupils' achievement was inadequate and standards exceptionally low by the end of Year 6. Since then, the school has developed a robust tracking and monitoring system that is helping to address this underachievement. National test and assessment results from 2007, together with school generated data show that standards at Key Stage 1 are broadly average and generally improving. At Key Stage 2, standards are below average in the three core subjects, and improving at a faster rate in English and science than in mathematics. Pupils' progress between the key stages is broadly satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress relative to their capabilities because of the effectiveness of targeted intervention strategies used by the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory with some good features. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is an area of strength in the school, with the pupils developing a good awareness of their own and others' cultures, including the importance of

different religions seen regionally and nationally. Well focused school assemblies and work-related learning opportunities further support the pupils' appreciation and greater awareness of the world outside of school. Pupils feel safe because there are few reported incidents of bullying but, although they are confident in approaching an adult if the need arises, a small minority indicated that there were occasional inconsistencies in the way some staff deal with these incidents. Pupils' behaviour is good, with friendly and cooperative attitudes seen in the vast majority of lessons. The school's commitment to the promotion of healthy eating and regular exercise has been recognised with the achievement of national awards in these areas. These have resulted in some improved outcomes for pupils; for example, in the increasing numbers regularly taking part in extra-curricular sport. Pupils are knowledgeable about healthy eating, but many are not fully committed to this particular lifestyle. The rate of attendance is in line with the national average, which is an indication, in part, that pupils enjoy attending school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. While some teaching is good, there is also a small proportion that is inadequate. Since the previous inspection, senior managers, with local authority support, have carried out regular monitoring of teaching across the school. Although this work has contributed positively to the improving percentage of satisfactory or better lessons seen, the school failed to hit its ambitious 2008 target of 80% of lessons being judged good or better. Staff are very aware that pupils need to make suitable progress in all their lessons in order to raise their standards. While the majority of lessons achieve this, some which have recently introduced organisational changes to the way in which pupils learn are less effective, and occasionally inadequate in ensuring that pupils make at least satisfactory progress in their learning. Teachers' planning is generally thorough in terms of activities to be taught, but not always sufficiently detailed about the skills, knowledge and understanding that the pupils should acquire in the lesson. Assessment data are collected and analysed effectively, which is helping the school to judge more accurately pupils' achievements and standards. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good, and characterised in the best lessons by mutual respect, tolerance and effective dialogue.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The provision for the curriculum and other activities is satisfactory. The school has responded well to the issues raised in the previous inspection, and has increased the curricular emphasis given to English and mathematics in order to raise standards in these subjects. Teachers are beginning to make meaningful links between these subjects, but this development is at an early stage and is currently more effective in contributing to improving the basic skills in literacy than in numeracy. The curriculum is enhanced by themed weeks, which pupils say adds significantly to their enjoyment of learning. Other additional activities, such as visits to places of interest that are linked to curriculum subjects and topics, are used well to provide the pupils with a focused approach to their work. Another initiative, introduced recently, has been the introduction of 'positive play' during the lunch time period. This provides additional challenge for pupils and promotes enjoyment and achievement in learning. There is an appropriate emphasis on personal development within the curriculum, particularly in bringing about

improvements in pupils' behaviour, their ability to work with others and their understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils is satisfactory.

Teachers have good relationships with the pupils, and take their care and general welfare very seriously. The school has responded positively to the issue raised in the previous inspection about the quality of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils are now making satisfactory progress in their learning relative to their capabilities. There are effective partnerships with external specialists, who are assisting teachers in providing advice and support for those pupils most in need. Health and safety practice is satisfactory and all reasonable efforts are made to safeguard the children. The Criminal Records Bureau checks are fully compliant. Recent work by senior managers and class teachers in the collation and analysis of pupil performance is helping the school to set challenging targets for improvement. However, this work is still underdeveloped in terms of ensuring that all pupils know exactly what to do to improve the quality of their work and achieve the learning targets that have been set for them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior leadership team has developed an accurate picture of the school's performance through a range of monitoring systems. As a result, senior managers have been successful in their actions to ensure that work is more appropriately matched to pupils of different abilities, especially those with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Any underachievement in pupils' performance is quickly identified and appropriate support provided. Procedures for checking on teaching and learning are in place, and additional training targeted at further improvements has been implemented. However, this has not yet been wholly successful and the quality of teaching and learning remains too inconsistent at key points in the school, which means that not all targeted support and training have resulted in improvements in pupils' standards and rates of progress. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. It has taken appropriate action to gather relevant information that will enable it to respond to local needs, including those of the pupils. As a result, pupils' aspirations of what they can achieve and their understanding of the diversity of the local community and wider world is developing well. Governors have clear systems for gaining information about the work of the school, with a detailed understanding of their responsibility to hold the school to account for its performance. Actions taken by the school since the previous inspection are beginning to successfully address some of the issues raised, which demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further and its achievement of satisfactory value for money.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	3

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	3
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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

30 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hylton Castle Primary School, Sunderland, SR5 3QL

You will know I recently visited Hylton Castle with two other inspectors to find out how well you are doing at school. During the visit, the inspectors watched you and your teachers in a number of lessons, chatted with many of you about life at school, spoke with senior staff and governors, as well as looking at the quality of your work in books and on display around the school. We also read very carefully the responses from all those parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire. A number raised concerns about leadership and management in school, so we have asked the senior staff and governors to find different ways of responding quickly to those parents who raise concerns. The headteacher and governors are very keen to work in partnership with all parents, and would welcome better links to help the school improve further.

The previous inspection, in July 2007, judged that your school needed to make significant improvements in a number of areas. We are pleased to say that satisfactory progress has been made, although standards are still too low and need to improve much more to ensure that you all do as well as you, your parents and teachers would want; this includes improving the teaching of phonics in the Early Years to raise standards in reading and writing. Overall, however, the school now provides you with a satisfactory standard of education.

Your teachers care that you are happy when you attend school, and that you feel safe and well supported. The different subjects that you study are appropriate, and are often made more interesting by visits out of school. The school is also keen to provide you with the best possible teaching in all your lessons. However, although the majority of lessons reach a satisfactory or better standard, some do not. When this happens, you do not reach the standards you should. We are, therefore, asking the school to improve all teaching so that it is at least good.

We are extremely grateful to all of you for making the inspection so enjoyable. We would encourage you to continue working hard, to attend school regularly, and also take advantage of all the extra activities that the school offers.

We wish you every success in the future.

Brian Blake HMI

Lead inspector