

High Spen Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108340
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	324749
Inspection date	30 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Shepherd

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)	151
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	Mrs Lynne Caffrey
Headteacher	Mrs Jean Fisher
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hugar Road High Spen Rowlands Gill Tyne and Wear NE39 2BQ
Telephone number	01207 542373
Fax number	01207 544871

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: progress of more able pupils, community cohesion, the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage and academic guidance. Evidence was gathered from the observation of lessons, an assembly and playtimes. Discussions were held with pupils, staff, the senior leaders and governors. Pupils' work, key documents and data including the school's self-evaluation were scrutinised. 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 assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school serves the village of High Spen as well as the surrounding area. There is a wide range of different social and economic circumstances, which overall are at average levels. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is higher than average, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. There are fewer pupils from ethnic minorities than usual. Pupils are organised in mixed-age classes. At the time of the inspection some teachers had moved to new age groups and there were two temporary members of staff.

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. It has some outstanding features. The headteacher sets a very clear educational direction to the work of the school. She knows each pupil very well and uses this knowledge to encourage individuals to succeed. There are close links with parents, who are kept very well informed about their children's progress as well as the school's weekly activities. Parents greatly appreciate the school's work. A typical example of the many positive comments from parents was, 'Great emphasis is placed on being respectful and kind to others as well as working hard and taking responsibility for their own actions...this in turn makes a happier, harder working classroom'.

Achievement is consistently good through the school. There is a strong emphasis on whole-school decisions and policies, which staff carry out well in lessons. This leads to good levels of consistency for pupils and allows them to build steadily on their previous learning. By the time they leave the school, standards are above average. Teachers' assessment results in Year 6 for 2008 show that standards rose in all subjects and particularly in English and science. More able pupils' progress varies between different subjects, with reading and science being higher than writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because staff match work closely to their needs and teaching assistants provide sensitive individual support for individuals in lessons, allowing them to take a full part in the learning.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school sets a high priority on this aspect of its work. One of the features of the school vision is to create 'a community where all members respect and value each other' and it is very successful in reaching this goal. The school has extremely high quality relationships with the village, resulting in pupils making excellent contributions to the community. For example, staff and pupils joined with village members to apply for a lottery grant to produce a memorial garden and commissioned a sculpture for two soldiers who had won the Victoria Cross. This initiative resulted in developing a very wide range of skills and understanding for pupils, including working with the sculptor, meeting war veterans and the Lord Lieutenant, presenting their poems in a major ceremony and contributing to a DVD and website. Together with a good grounding in basic skills, these opportunities prepare pupils extremely well for their future lives. Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their higher than average attendance levels. The school council takes its work very seriously and individuals have a strong understanding of their role in the school community. Pupils thoroughly enjoy looking after each other, particularly the older pupils with the youngest children. Care, guidance and support are excellent and result in confident and mature pupils with excellent behaviour. Safeguarding systems are in place.

Teaching and learning are good and pupils make good progress in lessons. Staff make sure that pupils understand how to succeed in their learning and give them clear advice when marking their work. The school is now in a good position for pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work in more detail. Teachers manage behaviour very well and in the best lessons a very fast pace is set. In a few whole-class sessions teachers do not provide enough challenge for more able pupils or have high enough expectations for these pupils in their group or individual work. The curriculum is well balanced and there are excellent opportunities for enriching pupils' learning. For example, the links with the local organic allotment involve pupils in planting and harvesting vegetables, bringing them to school, discussing menus with the cook and then eating the products at lunchtime. There are good quality whole-school projects, such as the book week and the Lowry project, which result in pupils developing understanding across different

subjects. Teachers handle the mixed-age classes well and make sure pupils' different needs are met.

Leadership and management are good and outstanding in promoting personal development. The headteacher sets up efficient systems that ensure the school runs smoothly despite changes such as staffing. She produces efficient records to track pupils' progress through the school, although there are not enough opportunities to record particularly high levels of achievement for a small number of more able pupils. Middle managers are enthusiastic about their roles and responsibilities. The governors work very closely with the school and are particularly good in promoting partnerships within the village. The school has an excellent understanding of its strengths and what it needs to do to improve in the future. This results in good improvement since the previous inspection. The emphasis on every member of staff being an important member of the school team, together with clear leadership and self-evaluation, ensures that there is a good capacity for improvement in the future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Overall children enter the Nursery at levels that are expected for their age, although several children have speech and language difficulties. There is a very wide range of ability between different children and considerable variations between each year group. Achievement is good because the staff team works efficiently to meet their individual needs. By the end of Reception the great majority have reached the expected levels for their age, although there are some lower levels in literacy. Children make excellent progress in their personal development. They choose independent activities with confidence and work in harmony with each other. Teaching and learning are good. Staff provide stimulating opportunities for development across the different areas of learning, such as comparing the taste between two different sandwiches that children have just made. In a few sessions opportunities are missed to challenge more able children. There are high levels of care, support and guidance. The organisation for children from both age groups to share the outdoor learning area works very well, although the range of opportunities for learning are not as wide as the indoor areas. Staff in the nursery know their children very well, but there is no formal allocation of children to a key worker to provide more efficient assessment procedures. Leadership and management are good with new members of staff being supported efficiently to allow them to become a valuable part of the team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency in the achievement of more able pupils in all subjects.
- Extend pupils' skills of evaluating their own and each others' work.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	1

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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

1 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of High Spen Primary School, Gateshead, NE39 2BQ

Thank you for being so very welcoming to me when I came to your school. You were all so friendly and helpful in answering my questions. I am writing to let you know what I found out.

You go to a good school that helps you to progress well through all the classes and leave with standards that are higher than average. Your personal development is outstanding. You behave very well in your lessons, around the school and in the playground. You carry out some very exciting projects in your village, particularly the work you did with the sculptor and the memorial garden. The work you do as a whole school is very interesting and I know that you really enjoyed dressing up as characters of a book last week. All the staff in your school work very well together to make sure that you learn well and understand how to look after each other. Your headteacher and the governors work very closely together to keep making your school a better place for you. Your teachers give you some very interesting tasks to do, both when you are together discussing things as a class, or when you work in small groups or on your own. Your school is going to make sure that every single one of you finds that the work is just right for helping you to learn even faster. It is also going to help you understand even better how you can improve your work, as well as getting better at helping each other to improve. I am sure that you will do you best to do these things.

I wish you the very best for your future lives and I hope that you will continue to help to make your school a happy place where everyone is working together.

Yours sincerely

Maggi Shepherd

Lead inspector