

Grange First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108444
Local Authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	324770
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	182
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 Ron Hinshaw
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Easton
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Norham Road Gosforth Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE3 2NP
Telephone number	0191 2852954
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Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a below average sized first school. It serves an area that is mixed socially and economically. A smaller proportion of pupils than in other schools nationally claim a free school meal. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most pupils are White British; however, an increasing number come from homes where English is not their first language. The school has undergone a number of disruptions to staffing since the time of the last inspection. There is currently an acting deputy headteacher in post and two classes are taught by teachers on temporary contracts covering for the absence of staff on maternity leave. The Early Years Foundation Stage Provision consists of a Nursery and Reception class.

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 important values of equality, fairness and respect for all are promoted effectively, so that pupils' personal development is outstanding. By Year 4, pupils have grown into extremely mature and confident individuals for their age. They behave exceptionally well and know how very important it is to respect people who are different from themselves. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and how important it is for their health to eat a good diet and take regular exercise. Pupils generally attend well and are very keen to contribute to school life. They very much appreciate the rota system which enables everyone to take a turn at representing their classmates through membership of the school council. The outstanding way in which equality and diversity are promoted contributes to good community cohesion. The work of the school council, the care by older pupils for younger ones and extensive fundraising, including for a child in Africa, all contribute to a sense of working together for the benefit of others.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well because of good teaching and an effective curriculum. Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and give pupils the confidence to play their part in becoming effective learners. Teaching styles are varied and the curriculum inspires learning because topics are well planned to capture pupils' enthusiasm and to follow their interests. Enrichment of the curriculum is strong and is a key reason why pupils say they greatly enjoy school. Recent changes aimed at improving curricular provision in mathematics are working well and standards are rising.

Since the last inspection, standards attained at the end of Year 2 have remained broadly in line with the national average and in Year 4, in line with those expected for pupils of this age. Inspection evidence confirms teachers' assessments that standards overall are higher in the current Year 2 and 4 than those attained in previous years and are above those typically expected overall. Leaders have put effective strategies in place to improve the teaching of writing and standards have improved since the last inspection, especially in Key Stage 1. However, in Key Stage 2, standards in writing are still not as strong as those in reading and mathematics. This is because there is no whole school system for the teaching of handwriting. By Year 4, this results in weaknesses in pupils' letter formation and presentation of their work which impacts negatively on the standards they attain.

The care and support for pupils is a strong feature of provision and the school meets current government requirements for safeguarding. Academic guidance is generally good. Pupils who find learning difficult benefit from skilled support and from well-established partnerships with external agencies. Those at an early stage of learning English do well because their needs are met with the same skill.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a strong steer. Very good systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school are used exceptionally well to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the school's good provision. Incisive evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses has enabled staff to put in place the steps to accelerate pupils' progress. However, leaders and managers including governors have been cautious in their expectation of the pace of change and inconsistencies remain in their expectations of what is needed to challenge all pupils to attain even higher standards. The school has maintained and in some respects improved the good quality of provision since its previous inspection. It has good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children generally enter Nursery with standards below those typical for their age. There is variation within this and the abilities of some children, particularly those in the early stages of learning English, are lower in communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development. Children of different gender, ethnicity and ability achieve well and, by the end of the Reception Year, attainment is mostly at a level typically expected for their ages.

Children are very safe and secure throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage due to good leadership and management, and the effective team work of staff. Welfare requirements are given due importance and are well met. Children's personal development is good; they are encouraged in healthy lifestyles and to be as independent as possible. Induction is good and shared observations between home and school are developing well to inform the children's learning. Relationships are strong. Practitioners show real enjoyment at being with children and are skilled in knowing when to intervene to move learning forward.

Provision for children's learning and development is good with a strong emphasis placed on their well-being and helping them develop the necessary skills for learning. In the Nursery, songs are used well to reinforce routines and listening. Observations are used to plan a broad curriculum which effectively meets children's needs. Currently, staff are more confident with focus activities but child-initiated learning is developing well as seen when Reception children made a chocolate machine in the compost and water. The outdoor area is organised to allow children to explore all areas of learning but is not as thoroughly developed as the indoor provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use challenging targets to increase expectations of the standards pupils can attain in Key Stage 2.
- Raise standards in writing by the end of Year 4 through improved curricular provision for the teaching of handwriting.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Year 1 with standards typical for their age in nearly all areas of learning. Some are less competent in communication, language and literacy because they are learning English is an additional language. All pupils, whatever their ability or ethnic background, achieve well. As a result, current standards in Year 4 are above those expected for pupils of their age in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing are in line with those expected for pupils aged nine. Since the last inspection, standards attained in national assessments at the end of Year 2 have been broadly average overall. Inspection evidence confirms the school's evaluation that in the current Year 2, standards are above average as the result of well targeted curricular initiatives aimed at providing pupils with good quality opportunities to put their skills and knowledge into practice in a variety of interesting ways.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding as is their moral and social development. Spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils are thoughtful, feel valued and are caring but some opportunities for reflection are missed. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils move around school in a very calm and orderly way. At break and lunchtime, they are very well supported by staff and by pupil playground helpers who lead games for younger children. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and are enthusiastic learners. Relationships throughout the school are exceptionally good. Attendance is improving and in the current school year is above average. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what they need to do to stay healthy and talk confidently about the value of healthy food and exercise. Emotional well-being is a strength of the school. Pupils feel very safe and value the opportunity the Diary Room gives them to discuss problems with a sympathetic adult. Pupils contribute actively to the school community and appreciate the fairness of the systems that give them all an excellent opportunity to contribute to their school and local community. Rising standards in basic skills and the development of excellent social skills prepare pupils well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils learn well because they find their lessons interesting. A well balanced mix of explanations, activities and discussion ensures that pupils are fully involved in their learning. Consistent strengths in teaching are to be found in the way pupils are managed and their efforts encouraged. As a result, pupils behave exceptionally well, feel good about themselves and are confident to challenge and ask questions. Teaching assistants are deployed well and are pro-active in supporting pupils particularly those who have difficulty with their learning or are at an early stage of learning English. Marking is mostly good but is not yet fully consistent in providing pupils with specific guidance as to how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils and parents alike appreciate the wealth of additional activities which the school provide. Enrichment activities which ensure that pupils really enjoy their learning increase their motivation to learn. An increasing integration of subjects through topics which capture pupils' enthusiasm promotes progress effectively across each year group. Following effective identification of relative weaknesses in the curriculum for the teaching of mathematics, detailed planning now ensures that pupils are engaged in a wide range of practical activities which help them to develop good mental strategies and regularly put their knowledge into practice. While similar curricular initiatives aimed at raising standards in writing have met with some success, particularly in Key Stage 1, the absence of a whole-school system for the teaching of handwriting hinders pupils' progress. As a result, standards in writing at Key Stage 2 remain lower than those in reading and mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is good. Parents are very positive about the school especially with regard to how well their children are nurtured and cared for. Procedures to keep pupils safe meet national requirements. Support for pupils' learning and emotional needs is good, particularly that given in class by learning support assistants, allowing all pupils to participate fully in whole-class sessions. Links with outside agencies are effective and have, for example, contributed to improved attendance. Guidance aimed at improving the rate of pupils' progress in lessons is good. Broad class targets are set for all pupils and the 'three stars and a wish' approach helps individual pupils know what they need to do to improve their work further. However, these systems are comparatively recent and not yet fully embedded in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good impact of leadership and management is evident in many ways. For example, a major focus on raising standards in mathematics and a whole-school focus on the teaching of letters and sounds are paying dividends in raising standards. The school does all it can to promote equality of opportunity and to eliminate any discrimination. As a result, pupils' personal development is outstanding. Regular tracking of pupils' progress has enabled the school to provide good support for those pupils who are in danger of falling behind. The governing body is well informed about the school and effectively holds the school to account for its performance. However, governors and the headteacher have not always been as ambitious as they might be in setting challenging targets to improve standards even further. The school is clearly embedded in its local community and has good links with it resulting in a good contribution to community cohesion. School leaders have made a useful evaluation of the impact of initiatives designed to strengthen pupils' understanding of their place in the school and how they can support those in other countries. The school is aware that pupils' appreciation of the diverse cultures in Britain is not quite as well developed and that pupils would benefit from more first-hand experiences in this respect.

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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 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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
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	2
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	2

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?	2

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grange First School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 2NP

Thank you for the lovely welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. You express your views very confidently. We were also grateful for the returned questionnaires we received from your parents. Please thank them on our behalf. Their comments have been very helpful. We agree with you and your parents that you go to a good school where you learn many new things and make good progress.

This is because you are taught well and lessons are interesting and fun. You told us how much you enjoyed school and we saw that for ourselves in the way you work hard in lessons. Your school is excellent in the way it promotes fairness and equality. This helps you to develop excellent attitudes to learning and each other and to make an outstanding contribution to your school community.

We have made two suggestions for the school to help your learning be even better than it is. We have asked your headteacher and governors to set challenging targets so that you can reach even higher standards and to put in place a system throughout the school to improve your handwriting.

You can help by trying very hard with your writing.

With all best wishes for your future success.

Yours faithfully

Linda Buller

Lead inspector