

Diamond Hall Infant School and Nursery Unit

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108760
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	324829
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Inkster 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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	312
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 Ann Pickering
Headteacher	Mrs Sally Collingwood
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Well Street Millfield Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR4 6JF

Age group	3–7
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2009
Inspection number	324829

Telephone number
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average size infant school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is much higher than the national average and has increased significantly in recent years. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational need is similar to that found nationally. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is similar to the national average, but higher than is usual in the local authority area. Most of these pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The catchment area of the school is changing significantly as the nature of housing has changed from owner-occupied to rented accommodation. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is increasing because some families move to the area on a temporary basis. Most pupils who join the school after the normal age of admission are new arrivals to the United Kingdom and speak little or no English. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage which includes a Nursery for 52 part-time children and three Reception classes. It is linked to a children's centre. The school offers extended services to families before and after school. The school has achieved Activemark and the Basic Skills award.

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. There are some aspects of its work, particularly pastoral care and support, which are outstanding. It is a highly inclusive school which nurtures and cares for the whole child and puts children and families at the heart of all that it does. It works extremely well in partnership with parents and other agencies to ensure that all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, receive the support they need. There are close links with a nearby children's centre. Family learning is given high priority including, for example, creative workshops for parents that are highly valued. Parents are included as valuable partners in their child's learning and this does much to promote pupils' self-esteem as their achievements are regularly shared with their parents and carers. This is endorsed by the views of parents and, as one states, 'the teachers work hand in hand with parents consistently' and 'the teachers get to know the children as individuals so they can address their specific individual needs'. Inspection evidence supports these views. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' appreciation and respect for different cultures is evident from their positive everyday relationships. Harmony across racial and faith groups is promoted very successfully. Pupils have an excellent understanding of right and wrong and their spiritual awareness is evident in the way they appreciate and reflect upon the world around them. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and this is demonstrated by their enjoyment of school, good behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning.

The good curriculum contributes very well to pupils' enjoyment of learning because of the many interesting and stimulating activities provided for them. The highly effective programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education does much to ensure that pupils understand how to stay safe and live a healthy lifestyle. There are appropriate, well planned opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and the school aspires to raise standards further in these subjects. However, opportunities are missed in some lessons for pupils to practise their skills in information and communication technology.

Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are generally well below those typical of most 3-year-olds. This is a different picture than at the time of the previous inspection because of significant changes in the school's intake of pupils. Pupils consistently make good progress from their starting points because of the good teaching they receive and the strong focus on promoting first hand experiences which cater effectively for their individual learning styles. As a result, pupils generally reach standards that are broadly average by the time they leave Year 2. Despite a recent dip in standards, this still represents good achievement from their starting points as demonstrated by work seen during the inspection, the outcomes of teacher assessments, and the school's own tracking data. Teaching is good with a particular strength in the frequent opportunities for discussion in 'talking groups'. This enables pupils learning English as an additional language to rapidly acquire skills in spoken English and all pupils to communicate effectively and collaborate well. However, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, there are not always enough opportunities for children to develop their writing skills. Academic guidance is good. Pupils understand their individual targets and marking helps them to improve. However expectations about the quality of handwriting, spelling and the presentation of work are not consistently high enough.

Leadership and management are good. All leaders are clearly focused on raising standards and achievement: this is a major reason why pupils make good progress. Self-evaluation is very effective. Leaders have a good understanding of what the school does well and take rigorous

action to address any areas identified for improvement. Governors work hard to support the school and challenge its work effectively. They are proactive in allocating resources to where they are most needed as demonstrated by the creation of an outdoor learning area for Reception pupils. The school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Good teaching enables children to overcome barriers to their learning and development. The school places a strong emphasis on developing children's speaking and listening skills. This enables all children, particularly those at the early stages of learning English, to make good progress in language acquisition. A substantial proportion of children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are well below those typical of children their age, particularly in their emotional development, calculation skills and reading. They make good progress because of the good quality of teaching and the interesting range of activities provided for them. Consequently, many reach a good proportion of the early learning goals expected of them by the end of Reception. However, some remain below expectations, particularly in writing.

The pupils now in Year 1 achieved particularly well by the time they left the Early Years Foundation Stage and some exceeded the early learning goals. Children engage eagerly in a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities and their 'Learning Journey' profiles include very detailed records of their achievements. Children make good progress in their personal development because of very effective welfare arrangements and the positive relationships between adults and children. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and staff work very effectively as a team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' handwriting, spelling and the presentation of their work.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop and apply information and communication technology skills to enhance their learning.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2 have been broadly average for a number of years. They dipped recently, particularly in reading and mathematics, because a higher proportion of pupils than usual had learning difficulties and/or disabilities or were learning English as an additional language. Furthermore, a significant number of these pupils only joined the school in Year 2. Inspection evidence and the school's data show that all groups of pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points. They make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The school has taken effective steps to raise standards in reading and mathematics. Additional support has been provided for targeted groups of pupils and, for example, all pupils have the opportunity to read on a daily basis. Parents are increasingly involved in supporting their child's learning. As a result, pupils are showing more confidence and are making better progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well being are good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. This, coupled with very good relationships with adults and each other, ensures that they fully enjoy school. This is reflected in their satisfactory and improving attendance. The school works very hard to support the minority of pupils who do not attend consistently. Pupils say that bullying is rare and they are confident that there is an adult to turn to when needed. Pupils are developing a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They make healthy eating choices and value the opportunities for exercise in lessons and at break times. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Spiritual and cultural development are particularly strong. Pupils of all ages participate enthusiastically and energetically in assemblies and spend time in lessons reflecting on what they have learned and how well they have participated. Pupils throughout the school have a good understanding of the differences and similarities between people from other cultures and relish the opportunities they have to share celebrations. For example, during the inspection the whole school was celebrating Chinese New Year with Chinese songs and stories and even a Chinese banquet for school lunch.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They enjoy singing, attending church festivals and raising money for different charities. Literacy and numeracy skills develop steadily and, because of the emphasis the school puts on speaking and listening, pupils become confident and happy learners. Although, pupils are developing their basic skills in information and communication technology, opportunities are missed to enable them to develop higher skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good because teachers plan work that is well matched to pupils' differing needs. This ensures that pupils are suitably challenged and their interest is maintained. Teachers provide good opportunities for discussion and their effective questioning successfully promotes pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils are attentive and respond well to teachers' clear instructions and explanations and this contributes to their good learning. There is a strong focus on ensuring that pupils benefit from practical and first hand experiences which cater well for their individual learning styles. For example, in cross curricular lessons in Year 1, pupils had the opportunity to see and touch a wide variety of materials in a science lesson and objects 'old and new' in history. There is very effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the needs of pupils who are learning English as an additional language are carefully considered. Teachers plan activities specifically to meet their individual needs to ensure their good progress. The school is also taking effective steps to provide more challenging work for able and talented pupils and consequently these pupils are also making good progress. Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to become fully involved in the use of information and communication technology to promote their learning. Teachers mark work thoroughly and give good advice on how pupils can improve their work. However, expectations about the quality of handwriting, spelling, and presentation of work are not consistently high enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum has a strong impact on pupils' personal development. It provides pupils with the skills and attributes to help them to become good learners, stay safe and lead healthy lifestyles. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' enjoyment because of the many exciting and creative cross-curricular links the school identifies. Special focus weeks, such as 'One World Week', broaden pupils' horizons and enhance the work they produce. For example, Reception children experienced making African masks, tasting African food and learning about safaris and other aspects of life. This illustrates how well pupils respond to these stimulating and exciting learning opportunities. In the same week pupils spent time learning about the most important aspects of their own city of Sunderland. The creative arts are a real strength on which the school plans to build by creating a new studio area. The curriculum is well adapted to help the growing population of pupils whose first language is not English and the whole school benefits from the special focus on speaking and listening and celebrating different languages. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught effectively in different subjects across the curriculum. Provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory. The curriculum is enriched well through the good outdoor facilities which have improved since the last inspection. Almost all pupils participate in at least one of the wide range of after-school clubs which greatly enhance their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for care, guidance and support is good. Pastoral care is outstanding and academic guidance is good. Excellent strategies such as the Nurture programme support pupils with learning difficulties and those who have specific social and emotional needs. Highly effective support is provided for pupils whose first language is not English and the school is recognised within the local authority as a leading school for English as an additional language. These strategies enable all pupils to take a full and active part in school life. The school works extremely hard to forge strong links with parents and, as a result, children settle quickly and successfully into school routines. Procedures for safeguarding, practices for child protection and all aspects of health and safety meet current requirements.

Academic guidance is good. Procedures to monitor and track the progress of individual pupils are effective and teachers act quickly to help pupils who are not making the expected progress for their age. Increasingly, more challenging targets are being set for pupils to boost their learning. Pupils understand how to reach their targets because clear guidance is given to help them. Marking also gives pupils effective guidance on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership team successfully promotes a calm and purposeful environment which has a positive impact on pupils' good academic and personal development. The headteacher and senior leaders are well focused on raising pupils' achievement, particularly in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The school's performance is rigorously reviewed so the school knows what it does well and takes appropriate action to bring about necessary improvements. Strategic planning is effective and draws on the views of staff, governors, parents and pupils. Subject

leaders have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and have contributed well to improvements in their subjects. The school has received effective support and appropriate challenge from the governing body. Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance through planned visits and links with senior leaders.

The school promotes equality of opportunity extremely well and is highly inclusive. Community cohesion is strategically planned and promoted well, developing pupils' awareness of their own cultures and those of others through, for example, the 'One World Week' when pupils learn about the communities and countries that they have connections with. The school places great value on the importance of using and developing home languages and in enabling pupils to access other faiths and cultures through curriculum links and celebrations such as Eid and Chinese New Year.

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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?	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	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which 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	3

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	2
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**

29 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Diamond Hall Infant School and Nursery Unit, Sunderland, SR4 6JF

Thank you for making Mrs Straw and me welcome in your school when we came to visit. Please thank your parents for sending in the questionnaires and let them know we have taken all their views into account. Your parents think this is a good school and we agree. You make good progress in your work. This is because teaching is good. These are some things that are strengths of your school.

- Your school takes excellent care of you so that you feel safe and secure.
- Your school makes sure that your parents are made very welcome so that they can come and find out how to help you with your learning.
- You really enjoy school, behave well and are keen to learn.
- You know the difference between right and wrong and are friendly and helpful towards each other.
- You sing beautifully in assembly and show great respect for each other's religions.
- You really enjoy learning about people in other countries, for example when you did lots of work about Chinese New Year.
- The headteacher, staff and governors work very hard to help you all learn as much as you can.

Every school has something it could do better, so this is what we have asked your school to do to help you learn even more.

- Help you to improve your handwriting and spelling and make sure that your work is very neat and tidy.
- Give you more opportunities to use computers and the interactive whiteboards in your classrooms to help you learn even more.
- Give younger children more opportunities to practise their writing skills.

You can help by continuing to work hard and by making sure you all come to school every day. Thank you for your help and the best of luck in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Christine Inkster Judith Straw

Her Majesty's Inspector Additional Inspector