

West Pelton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114004
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325924
Inspection date	30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	61
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 Keith Potts
Headteacher	Miss Julie McDowell
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	West Pelton Stanley County Durham DH9 6SQ
Telephone number	0191 3700238
Fax number	0191 3700238

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the pupils' achievement and the standards they reach; the quality of teaching and learning with a focus on initiatives to raise the achievement in mathematics especially more able pupils; the effectiveness of leadership and management especially in relation to the impact of new senior leaders, the capacity to improve and the effectiveness of Early Years Foundation Stage provision. Evidence was collected from the school's self-evaluation, nationally published assessment data, the school's records of pupils' progress, observations of lessons, the scrutiny of pupils' work, break and lunchtime and the school's priorities for further improvement. Discussions with pupils, staff, and governors were held and the questionnaires returned by parents were taken into account. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own judgements, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included in the report where appropriate.

Description of the school

This much smaller than average primary school is situated in a former mining community. All but one of the pupils is from a White British heritage and all speak English as their first language. Just fewer than half the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is rising and is currently double the national average. A significant proportion of the pupils join or leave the school other than at the usual times. The school hosts the Buttercup private Nursery and a community club. Since the start of the current academic year four out of the five teachers are new appointments including the headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

West Pelton is a good and improving school which provides good value for money. The recently appointed headteacher has gained the full confidence and trust of the parents who especially appreciate 'the family feel' and the way in which, 'they are included in decisions'. Parents are unanimous in their view that the school provides every opportunity for all children to achieve their best regardless of background or starting point. The comment, 'my child learns something different every day' sums up their views.

Pupils achieve well and reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Although pupils enter school with standards below that expected for their age, good progress is made because of the effective support they receive. Consequently, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their classmates. At the end of Year 2 pupils normally reach broadly average standards. The 2008 national assessments revealed a dip in standards, particularly in reading and writing. This was the result of a larger proportion of pupils with weak communication skills and a higher number of pupils joining the school at other than the normal time. Current Year 2 school information shows that standards have returned to their previous level. In recent tests, Year 6 pupils achieved broadly average standards though not all more able pupils did as well as they could in mathematics. Nearly all pupils in the current Year 6 are on course to exceed their challenging targets and standards in mathematics are improving. The improvements are the result of good teaching and learning which uses thought provoking, open-ended questions. This demands more analytical thinking especially from those more able and talented. Pupils are given the confidence to reason, speculate and solve problems. Achievement has been boosted because all staff expect the pupils to do well and all pupils are given an equal chance to develop their interests and abilities. Those joining at other than the usual time are well supported so that they can be fully involved. Developing use of themes is strengthening the curriculum quality across the school, for example, Islamic, Aborigine and African art is used to stimulate writing, drawing and painting. Not only does this lift achievement but also prepares pupils well for their next stage of learning and life in a diverse, ever changing world.

Assessment is good. Work is regularly marked and pupils are set clear, individual targets for improvement. They all know what they need to do to improve because of the good guidance that is given and their developing self-assessment skills. Personal development is good as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Attendance is average. Most pupils want to come to school because they are happy and enjoy their lessons. As a consequence, the absence rate has been reduced. The strong emphasis on mutual respect and friendship results in exemplary behaviour and a strong sense of family. Older pupils set an excellent example to younger pupils with their considerate and mature behaviour. Pupils on the school council relish the opportunities they have to improve the quality of learning and play. Playtimes are active because the spacious grounds provide many opportunities for all to play. The high quality of care is evident throughout the school. Safeguarding meets the current government requirements and the safe management of pupils is given a high priority. Pupils describe how safe they feel and say that staff are always on hand to listen to a worry or concern. The school's good links with the on-site Buttercup Nursery, support agencies and the local secondary school ensures that individual needs are well met.

At the heart of improvement is the crystal clear vision and drive of the headteacher. Expectations of what can be achieved have been raised and more active learning experiences, in and out of the classroom, are helping to sustain improved achievement. For example, visiting the nearby

Beamish Museum to study the daily life in a mining village. Staff talent and management skill is being carefully nurtured with well focused monitoring and the effective sharing of good practice. The headteacher is ably supported by a committed governing body. Their incisive involvement is reflected in the observation of the chair, 'we cannot have a finger on the pulse if we touch our caps'. Self-evaluation gives an accurate view of strengths and identifies the relevant priorities for improvement, for example, outdoor learning for Reception children. The harmony that exists in school and with the local community reflects how successfully the school evaluates its work and promotes cohesion. The pupils' increased awareness of national and global issues strengthens their respect for difference. Consequently the school demonstrates a good capacity to sustain improvement. Overall, good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in Reception get off to a good start in their education. Most start with skills and knowledge lower than expected for their age with communication skills a weakness. After making good progress they move into Year 1 with most developing the speaking, listening and early reading and writing skills expected of them. Children, especially boys, make really good progress in their personal development as a result of the clear expectations and support of staff. They learn how to keep safe and work together. Parents appreciate how well their children settle into routines to become confident learners. Careful planning makes sure all children are included. They grasp that physical activity keeps them fit and enjoy the benefits of a healthy drink and snack afterwards. They are keen to get their work completed correctly, for example, using interactive technology to calculate the number of spots to be added to a giraffe and then listening attentively to the African herdsman to see if their solution is correct. Regular observation and assessment ensure that staff are aware of each child's progress and what needs to be planned next. A wide range of activities is planned indoors but outdoor learning does not fully exploit opportunities to explore, investigate and promote spontaneous learning of the world around them. The provision is well led and managed. The staff are eager to take advantage of the increased resources provided by the headteacher to raise achievement as more quality opportunities are provided for both child initiated and teacher directed learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement and standards in mathematics, especially for the more able and talented pupils.
- Improve the quality of outdoor learning for Early Years Foundation Stage children.

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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	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	2
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	1
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	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Pelton Primary School, Durham, DH9 6SQ

We thoroughly enjoyed our inspection of your school and appreciated your friendly welcome. We were impressed by the happy family atmosphere and your enthusiasm in lessons to do as well as you can. We enjoyed talking to the school council and seeing how much you enjoy your lessons and playtimes with your friends. You go to a good and improving school. These are some of the things the school does well.

- You are taught well and receive good care, support and guidance.
- You make good progress and achieve well.
- Your behaviour is exemplary. We were really impressed with your considerate attitudes and how well you got on with one another.
- You thoroughly enjoy the many interesting activities and clubs arranged for you.
- Your school's leaders are determined to continue to improve your school, so that you can all do as well as you possibly can.
- You are well looked after and your headteacher and staff work very hard to make certain that no one is left out.
- Your parents are really pleased with your progress in school.

We have asked your school to improve your education by making sure you develop your mathematical skills and provide even more challenge for the most able pupils. We have also asked the school to improve the quality of outdoor learning for Reception children.

You all have an important part to play helping to improve your school. You can play your part by attending regularly, listening very carefully to the advice and guidance of your staff and by working as hard as you possibly can. This will help you continue to achieve well and reach even higher standards.

Thank you for helping us with this inspection. We hope the school will keep on building on its strengths.

Best of luck to you all.

Clive Petts

Lead inspector