

Toft Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114107
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325947
Inspection date	25 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Gianna Ulyatt

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)	168
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 Alison Barron
Headteacher	Mr Richard Whitfield
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Toft Hill Bishop Auckland County Durham DL14 0JA
Telephone number	01388 832393
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the school's strategies to balance the differences in girl/boy attainment in Key Stage 1
- the impact of early reading strategies in the Reception class.

Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons and scrutiny of relevant documents. Discussions were held with pupils, staff, 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 inspectors 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 is smaller than most primary schools nationally and is set in an area where socio-economic conditions are average. Pupils who attend come from villages just outside Bishop Auckland. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for a free school meal is below average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and all pupils have English as their first language. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage receive full time provision in the 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 that shows exceptional levels of care, guidance and support for its pupils. A harmonious, warm and friendly atmosphere permeates all aspects of school life. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils are very mature in their outlook and show excitement and interest in learning, as well as great pride in their achievements. Parents are wholeheartedly delighted with the caring and positive influence the school has on their children. The high return of questionnaires and the numerous positive comments are testament to the confidence parents have in the school. The strong and caring leadership of the headteacher, who is well supported by the senior team, has ensured that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved year-on-year.

When children enter the school, their attainment is below that expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 where standards are average. Good progress continues in Key Stage 2 and standards for pupils at the end of Year 6 are above average. Results of the 2007 tests were above average, with achievement in mathematics being much better than in English and science. Unvalidated test results show that pupils in the 2008 cohort made good progress. They attained a better balance across subjects, than the previous year, and achieved equally well in English, mathematics and science. Almost half of the cohort reached the higher Level 5. In this very inclusive school, pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well due to additional adult support and helpful intervention programmes. A major strength of the school is the way it tracks the progress of every pupil. School assessment data show that current Year 6 pupils are making good progress and are expected to reach the challenging targets set for them. Progress in Key Stage 1 is good overall, but boys are not achieving as well as girls in reading and writing.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is excellent in this inspiring learning climate. Pupil behaviour is outstanding. In their time at school, pupils become very well-balanced individuals. They have high self-esteem and feel very safe and secure in school. They thoroughly enjoy their education and are responsive and eager to learn. Pupils are ambitious for their future well-being and have a very clear understanding about why education is so important. This is well seen by the above average attendance. Pupils are eager to fund raise and have a strong compassion for those less fortunate than themselves. They are very good at looking after the younger pupils. Pupils have a very active lifestyle complemented by a sensible approach to diet. All pupils are expected to help with the smooth running of the school through the various jobs allocated to them. They have a deepening awareness of ecological issues. This is translated into action as pupils conserve energy by ensuring lights are switched off, check the use of water and promote the recycling of paper and plastic. They are proud of the school garden and the vegetables they grow, some of which are entered into local competitions.

Pupils learn so well because teaching is good. Relationships in all classes are warm and friendly. Activities have a clear sense of purpose. Pupils say lessons are exciting because they learn many different things each day. They enjoy practical lessons, discussion sessions as well as lessons where they can write their thoughts and feelings. In the best lessons, paired and group work is a common feature and gives pupils a strong sense of well-being. As a result, pupils say they can talk to anyone should they have need because they already share their thoughts, ideas and feelings with classmates. Teachers provide challenging tasks, consequently, pupils display high levels of concentration and a very good work ethic. Teachers guide pupils towards becoming

increasingly responsible for assessing and evaluating their own work and the work of others. Consequently, pupils have very clear aims and know exactly what they have to do to make their work better. Teaching assistants support pupils well. Pupils are improving their competence with technology. The school has successfully developed strategies to improve achievement in science by using a consistent approach towards teaching pupils investigation skills. The school has adopted strategies to equally engage boys and girls in English. These are successful in Key Stage 2, where boys say, 'We love English and writing because we find out about real life situations and can put down our own ideas.' However, in Key Stage 1, mainly because of changes in staffing, the strategies are not fully embedded. Consequently, boys do not do as well as the girls in reading and writing.

Pupils enjoy a broad and varied curriculum which is well enhanced by a range of clubs. Some pupils show their eagerness to keep fit by starting each day at the Get up and Go Club. Pupils say there is much to choose from, so everyone gets the chance to enjoy new activities, including different sports, technology, art, dance, or music. They especially enjoy visitors to the school and school outings, both of which broaden their horizons. Pupils receive very high levels of care because systems and procedures to protect and safeguard them are in place and well adhered to. Staff know each individual pupil and are well informed about protecting them. Pupils say they feel very safe and cared for in school.

Leadership rigorously monitors all aspects of the school's provision. The school has recently distributed management responsibilities to key staff who use data and regular staff discussions effectively to monitor pupils' progress. Interventions are put in place when it is noted a pupil needs extra help. Staff throughout the school, work well as a team to improve provision for all pupils. The school knows itself well and uses this knowledge of strengths and areas in need of improvement to produce action plans that are very relevant to its needs. Governance is good and governors play a full and active part in the school's strategic leadership. They evaluate, challenge and support the work of the school to ensure it continues to provide a good education for its pupils.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children are admitted to the Reception class from many pre-school settings. Parents speak highly about the contact the school has with them before their child starts school. On entry attainment is below what is typical for this age and is especially low in communication, language and literacy and children's knowledge and understanding of the world. By the end of Reception, children reach broadly average standards. Boy's attainment is generally lower than girls. The school has recently introduced new systems for teaching children to recognise letters and sounds and this is improving progress particularly in reading and writing. Provision for their learning and development is good. Outstanding provision for children's welfare ensures children settle well and quickly gain in confidence because adults show high levels of care and attention to individuals. Assessment practices are well embedded and the current focus is appropriately aimed at improving skills in communication, language and literacy. Behaviour is very good. Teaching is good because adults provide a good range of practical first-hand experiences that has a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children learn in a bright, stimulating classroom and in an imaginative outdoor space, both of which are used to capture their attention and make learning fun. For example, outdoors children search for letters in an activity that links their topic on movement effectively with early reading skills. Leadership is good and the new Early

Years Foundation team is well placed to improve further because the action plan is based on an accurate audit of current provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attainment in reading and writing for boys in Key Stage 1.

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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?	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	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?	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	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**

25 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Toft Hill Primary School, Durham, DL14 0JA

Thank you so much for making the inspectors so welcome in your school. It was a delight talking with such mature and sensitive pupils. Your openness and ability to express your thoughts and ideas so freely is quite stunning. The school and your parents must be very proud of you. I was very impressed with your attitudes to learning in lessons. You concentrate very well and are enthusiastically involved in all that is going on. This is one of the reasons why you achieve well.

Discussions with older pupils led me to understand that your school is a friendly and happy place in which to learn. You feel very safe there and can talk to anyone about problems, whether they be large or small. You talk with great compassion and concern about children less fortunate than yourselves. You are determined to be true eco warriors by conserving energy and water and by recycling what you can. You love your school garden and enjoy making graphs about the produce you grow. That's a very clever way to use your mathematical knowledge! You really enjoy class and school competitions and the display of awards, cups and shields in the bright and attractive corridor is impressive. This is one of the reasons why attendance is so good.

Your school is a good school because your teachers care very much about you. I know you thoroughly enjoy lessons, because, even though the teachers make you work hard, they make learning fun at the same time. Standards are improving because you know how well you are doing and what you have next to think about. At the end of Key Stage 2 boys and girls do equally well in their subjects. In Key Stage 1 girls tend to do better than boys in reading and writing, so I have asked the school to look more carefully at this.

I hope you continue to enjoy your time at school. I hope you work hard, so you are ready for the next school and that your ambitions are well fulfilled.

With very best wishes.

Yours faithfully

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector