

# New Brancepeth Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114119
<b>Local Authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	325949
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Andrew Scott

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	130
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Bell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Armstrong
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 January 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	New Brancepeth Durham County Durham DH7 7EU
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 3730736
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 3730736

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

## Description of the school

This small school serves a former mining village and surrounding area, in which socio-economic conditions are below average. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all pupils come from White British families. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery class and a Reception class in one combined unit.

## 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 has clearly developed well since the last inspection. Standards have risen appreciably, because of improvements to teaching and good leadership of the school. The school is successful in promoting good attitudes and behaviour, attributes that underpin the good personal development of pupils. It is a caring place with very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils feel safe and, following the good example set by staff, develop positive relationships with one another for the most part. Pupils work hard and enjoy school, especially the various clubs and practical activities. They develop good social skills, a sense of community and responsibility and, as such, are well prepared for the next phase of their life. Parents are pleased with what the school offers. One comment typified others: 'I know that the health, welfare and education of the children are foremost in any decisions or actions made by staff.'

Pupils achieve well overall. Standards by the end of Year 6 have risen sharply in the past two years in English, mathematics and science. The current year group has made excellent progress through Key Stage 2 because of the consistently high quality teaching they have received. Standards in the main subjects of English, mathematics and science are now above average, but closer to average in English. Standards by Year 2 remain broadly average, with a comparative weakness in reading. The school has been working to develop pupils' vocabulary and expression throughout the school and, although good progress has been made, there is still some way to go. Pupils produce good art work but attainment in other subjects is no higher than average. Attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) is limited by staff's own computer skills. Although the curriculum is good overall, the school is aware that the focus on the main subjects has squeezed the time available for other subjects. Attempts to link subjects together to broaden the curriculum have only really been successful within English.

Teaching has improved in the school because good systems to ensure consistency of practice are well monitored, especially by the headteacher. Regular performance management and targeted training for all staff has meant that teachers usually plan work for pupils based very much on their prior learning and capabilities. Lessons are well structured to enable good step-by-step learning, with sufficient scope for faster learners. Classrooms are positive environments. Sometimes, though, the level of work is not skilfully matched to pupils' needs and this slows the pace of learning. Pupils particularly appreciate the guidance from staff and respond well to the rigorous but supportive marking system that all teachers use.

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and governors, leads the school well. He has a clear awareness of the rounded education that children need and has provided the support and professional guidance to staff to achieve this. He has also liaised well with outside agencies and, increasingly, with parents to maximise opportunities for pupils. The school has a very clear view of its strengths and weaknesses, and establishes effective action plans to address any shortcomings. Its astute self-awareness, the shared commitment by staff and its undoubted improvement over time stand the school in good stead for the future.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children benefit from a good start to school in the Nursery and Reception classes. Their attainment when they enter school varies. It is usually below average, but occasionally higher

and sometimes lower. They make good progress especially in their language, mathematical, personal and creative development. Their progress in physical development and knowledge of the wider world is less secure and not enough children reach the levels expected of five-year-olds in these aspects. Opportunities are not always taken to improve pupils' experiences of the world. Overall the standards attained by children are appropriate for their age. Children develop the confidence and social skills necessary for them to learn well because teaching is good. Staff provide a good range of activities inside and outdoors that stimulates enquiry and verbal skills, for example. Children are capable of working well on their own but function more effectively with adult guidance which is usually close by. Learning is progressive and staff monitor children's progress well, but there is scope for greater challenge in some areas, especially to develop children's physical skills. Parents are right to be appreciative of the good care taken by staff of their children. Staff also encourage responsibility; for example, children use the slide on their own. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led; good systems ensure that staff work as a cohesive team. However, the leadership has no plans to consider providing a covered area to enable children to learn outdoors, even when it is raining.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop more links between subjects to ensure a better balance across the curriculum and to help pupils achieve equally well in all subjects.
- Improve staff's knowledge and confidence in using ICT in order to provide a suitably broad curriculum that will boost pupils' standards.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage improve children's physical development and their knowledge of the wider world.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

All pupils achieve well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and older pupils achieve even better. Standards are currently above average in Year 6. Standards in Key Stage 1 have risen noticeably since 2006 and were broadly average in 2008 in reading, writing and mathematics. This represented good progress for this year group from their starting points. Early indications are that pupils in the current Year 2 have not done quite so well, especially in reading, partly because of some disruption to normal staffing. However, standards remain broadly in line with those expected of seven-year-olds and their progress over time has also been good.

Standards in Key Stage 2 were below average in 2006 and 2007, especially in English. They began to rise in 2007 in science, and were followed in 2008 by English and mathematics. All subjects were then broadly average. Standards have continued to rise in 2009 with English broadly average, and mathematics and science appreciably higher. This year group has benefited from excellent teaching throughout their time in Key Stage 2. As a result, their progress has been outstanding. Pupils' attainment in art is also good, but their attainment in other subjects, including ICT, is no higher than average.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Pupils develop self-confidence and self-worth in their time at school. Older pupils are mostly responsible; some, for example, are happy to work with Nursery children over lunchtime. Pupils

get on well together and behaviour is generally good. Pupils talk of some bad behaviour, but know that this is quickly dealt with, so they feel safe. Links with overseas schools, together with various visits and visitors, help to broaden their awareness of difference cultures in Britain and beyond.

Pupils understand about the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy the after-school sports activities but are less active themselves outside school. They appreciate what a healthy diet is but some find it hard to make the right choices at times. Pupils enjoy the close-knit school community and playing their part in its development, as members of the school council. They like school and attendance has been slightly above average in recent years. This year, attendance has slipped a bit because of unusual illness and term-time holidays by some families. With increasingly good basic skills and personal responsibility, pupils are well prepared for their life ahead.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent, and is good overall. It is especially effective in Years 5 and 6 where consistently high expectations of pupils, very good subject knowledge and very well structured planning have resulted in outstanding learning over time. For the most part, teaching is good because teachers generate a good working atmosphere in classrooms, planning is systematic and linked to previous learning and tailored to meet the needs of all pupils, regardless of capabilities or backgrounds. Effective extra support, often by teaching assistants, enables lower attaining pupils to make at least good progress. Higher attaining pupils increasingly have the chance to work at their own pace. Teachers apply the school's marking policy consistently so that pupils not only know how to improve but they also have to put right what they did not get right in the first place. They learn from their mistakes and say that they are happy to do so.

Sometimes, though, teaching is less effective, particularly when the work is not well matched to needs. On these occasions, pupils say that the work can be too hard or too easy; this hampers learning to some extent. The pace of learning also slows when teachers do not inject a sense of urgency. Although teachers insist on work being corrected, not all are vigilant enough about the quality of pupils' presentation.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good, particularly in its influence on English, mathematics and science, as well as pupils' personal development. The core curriculum is well structured and provides clear progression of skills and ample opportunity to develop them. For example, older pupils encounter a wide range of writing styles. There is a strong emphasis on practical work to support science investigations, for example, much to the pupils' pleasure. Teachers often introduce different subjects within English lessons to put learning in context and widen pupils' experiences. There is still room for improvement here, and especially in other subjects. Not enough time has recently been devoted to geography, for example. The school is well aware that the ICT curriculum is underdeveloped and is taking steps to overcome this.

The provision for personal, health and social education is very good. It has been particularly proactive in countering a local problem of tooth decay, for example. A one night sleepover in makeshift shelters gave pupils a real glimpse into the deprivations of homeless people. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from good individual learning plans and close support. Those withdrawn for special group work in Key Stage 2 have made especially good progress.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school takes good care of its pupils. Pupils certainly say that they feel secure and have full confidence in staff to sort out any concerns that arise. Parents endorse this view. The school is quick to act when pupils have emotional, behavioural or other problems and work well with other agencies and families to overcome or minimise the issues. Formal systems to safeguard pupils are efficient and meet statutory requirements. All staff, for example, are thoroughly vetted and there is regular training for child protection. All policies, including health and safety, are appropriate and up-to-date.

Rigorous procedures to record pupils' progress are strengthened by frequent analyses of the data to evaluate learning and see which pupils need further help. Consequently, teachers are able to group pupils accordingly or enable them to benefit from personalised tuition so that they catch up. Targets to improve literacy and numeracy skills are well focused and pupils know them. However, each target lasts for a term thus limiting the opportunity for identifying other possible areas to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is well led and managed at all levels. The headteacher is clear-sighted, caring and hard-working. He has the interest of the pupils at heart and his vision for school improvement is shared by all staff. Good systems of, for example, assessment and marking, result in a good consistency among staff. He ensures a strong focus on the professional development and support of staff, and is well supported by the deputy headteacher. Governors play a good part in the school's development and visit the school routinely to check on progress. Although their role as a critical friend to the school is informal governors seek out confidently more information if they are unclear about any issues.

The school has secure systems for self-evaluation. Its judgements are accurate, perceptive and based on a regular programme of monitoring activity. Importantly, senior leaders analyse findings to help decisions about deployment of staff and future development. Action plans are, therefore, based on clear rationales and so have more merit and success. This is true of the school's contribution to community cohesion which is good. Close links with the village include the growing of prize leeks for the local show. Visits to France and Germany, as well as special culture weeks, indicate the school's commitment to developing pupils' sense of community.

Certainly, the school has improved well since the last inspection. Standards are rising, teaching is stronger and the efficient systems ensure stability and consistency. Developments in ICT and other curricular aspects still have some way to go, but the school is aware of the issues and has already taken some effective action. As a result, the school is poised well to develop further.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

9 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of New Brancepeth Primary School, Durham, DH7 7EU

I am writing to thank you for the welcome you gave me when I recently inspected your school. It was good to meet so many of you and see you at work. Your comments, and those of your parents, helped me to get to know your school well. I would now like to tell you what I found out.

Yours is a good school. Staff take good care of you and encourage you to work hard. Teaching is good because teachers mostly give you work that is challenging and interesting. They are particularly good at guiding your thoughts and giving advice in class and through their marking. As a result, you are making good progress and your standards are increasingly higher than those expected for your age in English, mathematics and science. Teaching is especially good for older pupils; it is not surprising that your standards have really risen over time and that your achievement is good.

I know that you work hard and enjoy school, although your attendance has slipped a little this year. You know about the benefits of exercise and good food, but sometimes find it hard to choose the healthiest possible diet. Your behaviour is good. I know that there is some bad behaviour but you told me how well the staff deal with this, which is why you feel safe. Your good work with the local community has been spreading further afield; such activity is important preparation for your future life.

Your headteacher and all the staff and governors want the best for you. That is why they take care to check how well you and the school are doing. The actions they take to improve the school have been successful but there are still some things that need improving. Although you have a good curriculum, you do not study all subjects as much as the main subjects and this includes ICT. There are good plans to improve ICT; it is very important for staff to have the skills to spur your progress. I would also like the school to make sure that all subjects have enough time over the year and to extend the blending of subjects like you already do in English. For those of you in the Nursery and Reception classes, I have asked the school to devote more time to improve your physical development and knowledge of the world.

I wish you all every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Scott

Lead inspector