

# Mowden Infants' School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114182
<b>Local Authority</b>	Darlington
<b>Inspection number</b>	325959
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joy Frost 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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	179
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>	Mrs Keeley Edwards
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Taylor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 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>	Bushel Hill Drive Darlington County Durham DL3 9QG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 460933
<b>Fax number</b>	01325 357548

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<b>Age group</b>	4–7
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

This is an average sized infant school serving an area of relatively high socio-economic circumstances in Darlington. Pupils join the school from a wide range of pre-school settings; one of which shares the infant school site. This pre-school setting did not form part of this inspection. Very few of pupils are entitled to a free school meal. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average although a small number of pupils have severe and complex learning needs. Most pupils are of a White British heritage and none are at the early stages of learning to speak English. This is a popular over subscribed school. There is extensive provision in the area for wrap around care and pre and after school provision which parents take advantage of. The school has the sports Activemark, Healthy Schools, Eco School and Investors in People awards.

## 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. Pupils' personal development and the pastoral care provided by the school are excellent. All teachers work together very effectively to create a warm and friendly atmosphere where all pupils are valued and every child is an individual. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent expressed the views of many when they wrote 'Teachers definitely go the extra mile for children. They care for each individual child and bend over backwards to be accommodating.'

The consistently good teaching across the school results in pupils achieving very high standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave at the end of Year 2. Standards in writing, although high, are lower than other subjects especially for boys. All pupils matter in this school and this is exemplified by the way pupils develop independent learning skills from a very young age and are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well integrated into the school and make the same good progress as their peers.

Teachers' planning is detailed and matches the needs of different groups of pupils well. The use of interactive whiteboards and other resources engage pupils in their learning and keep their interest throughout the task. Teachers give very clear instructions and establish classroom routines from a very early age so that no time is wasted. Pupils work at a brisk pace and complete a good amount of work in a day. This is because teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

The curriculum is good because it has been developed to meet the specific needs of the pupils in the school. Transition from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) into Year 1 is smooth due to the redesigned curriculum which closely matches the EYFS provision. Pupils follow a carousel of activities throughout the day with focused teacher led sessions. During the inspection pupils were seen to display an exceptional level of concentration, enjoyment and independence in the way they approached the tasks set. In Year 2 pupils are set by ability for English and mathematics which has had a positive impact on raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics. A number of visits and visiting professionals enrich the curriculum and help pupils learn about the wider world. These young pupils have a good awareness of other cultures and faiths and are able to talk confidently about differences and diversity.

The procedures to safeguard pupils meet statutory requirements and underpin the outstanding pastoral care and welfare pupils receive from all staff. This creates the learning environment where pupils flourish and consequently they told inspectors that they love coming to school. Although there are regular recorder and Spanish clubs, opportunities for pupils to engage in extra-curricular activities are limited because many pupils attend after school provision in other settings.

The leadership team, comprising the headteacher and deputy headteacher set a clear direction for the school with appropriately challenging targets for all pupils. The rest of the staff work very closely together in teams to plan improvements in teaching and learning and to raise standards and achievement. However, most management responsibilities are held by the leadership team and there are insufficient opportunities for staff to develop management skills and become involved in monitoring and evaluating at a whole-school level. The school knows itself very well. Nevertheless, procedures for school self-evaluation are not formally set out and do not directly involve all staff. The school improvement plan is not detailed enough to

enable the school to monitor and identify which planned actions are having the most impact. The governing body supports the school well. They are beginning to challenge the work of the school more and are developing a plan to become more involved in monitoring the school's work for themselves. Due to the sustained rise in standards and achievement over a number of years the school has been effective in bringing about improvements and has a good capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision for children in the EYFS is good. Children's skills and knowledge when they enter school are slightly above that expected for their age. They quickly settle into school because good procedures for learning are established from day one. The care and welfare offered by the staff is exemplary and this enables all children to feel safe and secure and build good relationships with their peers. All staff have a common understanding of how young children learn and work together very well as a team. There is a good balance between teacher directed, focused activities and activities children choose for themselves. Children show very good levels of concentration, perseverance, enthusiasm and enquiry, and as a consequence they make good progress in all areas of development and satisfactory progress in writing.

There are identified key workers who are responsible for individual children and they liaise well with parents. Assessments of children's work are carried out daily and are used to plan activities which closely match children's abilities and interests both in the classroom and in the outdoor area. A focused programme of phonics helps children to acquire the skills necessary to become good readers by the time they leave but their skills in using this knowledge to write for themselves is not as well developed. The provision is well led and managed by the two experienced teachers in the unit.

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

- Improve writing across the school especially for boys
- Improve systems for school self-evaluation so that planned actions are more detailed and include more formal systems for monitoring the impact of those actions
- Increase opportunities for more staff to develop management skills and responsibility for leading subject areas

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are high and achievement is good. From slightly above average starting points children make good progress across the EYFS and enter Year 1 with skills and knowledge that are above that expected for their age in all six areas of learning except elements of communication, language and literacy development. In Years 1 and 2 pupils continue to make good progress because of good teaching and the regular and accurate assessments of their work. By the end of Key Stage 1 standards are consistently high in reading, writing and mathematics although lower in writing than in other subjects especially for boys. This is because fewer pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in this subject. The school has identified this as an area for improvement and has introduced the 'Big Write' initiative to engage more boys in writing. Tracking of pupil progress carried out by the deputy headteacher is good and shows that writing is improving across the school but the leadership team have not yet evaluated the impact of this initiative on the progress of boys.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development and well-being including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Participation in lessons is excellent. Pupils' enjoyment of their work is very clear, as is their unstinting eagerness to learn. This is particularly evident in their energetic and enthusiastic participation in activities throughout the school day. They develop a good sense of safety in school and understand the measures which contribute to this, such as clear guidelines on what to do if bullying occurs. Behaviour both in classrooms and around the school is of a very high standard. The need for intervention by teachers, assistants and other adults is minimal because pupils take a good deal of responsibility for their own actions. Attendance is consistently well above the national average.

Pupils have a very good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and they are supported through a wide range of school initiatives. The contribution that pupils make to the community is good. They eagerly participate in a variety of events and activities supporting local and national charities. Pupils express their ideas and views for improving the school community through the school and Eco councils. They appreciate the variety of cultures around them through celebrations in assemblies of a variety of different religions. The school has strong links with the local church. Progress with the basic skills of numeracy, literacy and information and communications technology (ICT) is excellent which stands them in good stead for their future education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their pupils very well and carefully plan activities which match their abilities. This provides opportunities for pupils to work at a pace suitable to their needs. Teachers' expectations are consistently high. Lessons stimulate pupils' interest and hold their attention because teachers have good subject knowledge. They provide a wide range of varied and stimulating activities for pupils. Well-established routines are evident within which pupils are strongly encouraged to learn how to work independently. Consequently, concentration levels are high and pupils make good progress on a lesson by lesson basis. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and contribute strongly to the learning of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they are fully included in class activities and also make good progress.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and it has some innovative features, such as the transitional activities in Year 1 which are effective in raising pupils' confidence and providing a less intimidating introduction to a more formal curriculum. The curriculum meets requirements, and the needs of all pupils including those with more complex learning needs. The use of ICT in many areas of the school curriculum is well embedded which enhances pupils learning. They confidently discuss the work they have done with computers such as manipulating text and images for a greeting card. Pupils' awareness of their school community is enhanced by the individual contributions they make to the inventive creation of the school quilts which re-enforce both

the sense of belonging and traditions of their school. There is good provision for pupils to understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle through two hours of physical education a week; out of school physical activities and healthy eating initiatives leading to the schools Healthy School status and the Sports Activemark.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's arrangements for the care, guidance and support of its pupils are good. Some aspects stand out; for example, very effective strategies and partnerships with health and other support agencies which jointly foster the personal development and well-being of pupils with physical and medical learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The excellent ethos throughout the school has established a very effective learning environment in which every single child matters. Very good procedures effectively promote the pupils' health, safety and well-being. Effective supervision and sensible arrangements allow pupils to play energetically and enjoy the outdoor play equipment safely. Teachers use a range of assessments to gauge how well pupils are doing on a short term basis, but the individual targets in pupils' books are not always linked to the current piece of work. Targets for writing and reading are helping pupils know the next steps in their learning and the school is in the progress of improving the targets set for mathematics.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The responsibility for management roles are held jointly by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. There are currently no other identified management roles within the school and opportunities for staff to further develop management skills through leading subject areas are limited. Nevertheless, the staff work together very well in teams to monitor and evaluate aspects of the schools work and this corporate leadership has been effective in bringing about improvements in pupil outcomes. The deputy headteacher uses data very well to check that improvements are on track and the school self-evaluation is accurate in that it identifies the correct areas for development. However, planned actions to bring about improvement are not detailed enough and identified success criteria is not always measurable. Consequently, the school is not always able to focus their monitoring effectively on which actions are having the most impact on pupils' learning. The governing body support the school well. The newly appointed Chair is well aware of her role and the need to ask more challenging questions about the school's work and already has plans for all governors to become more involved through links with individual teachers and more visits to the school. The school know their local community very well and are actively extending pupils knowledge of other countries and communities leading to good procedures for community cohesion.





## 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?	1
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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
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>	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	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1

## 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	3
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**

4 December 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Mowden Infants' School, Darlington, DL3 9QG

I would like to thank you for the very warm welcome you all gave the inspection team who visited your school recently to see how well you are doing. We observed you in lessons and around the school; looked at your books and spoke to some of you and your teachers. Please thank your parents for filling in their questionnaires, we read all of them and took their views into account. We were very impressed with how independent you all are and how well you take responsibility for your own actions. We think you go to a good school and that some things are outstanding. These are:

- your behaviour, attitudes and attendance are excellent
- you achieve very high standards in your work
- you all get along famously together and care for each other very well
- you work very hard in lessons and really concentrate on your work
- you are extremely enthusiastic about your school and enjoy coming every day
- your teachers take excellent care of you.

There are some things we have asked the headteacher and governors to improve so that your school will be even better. We would like the school to improve the writing standards of some of the boys so that they do as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics. We have also asked the headteacher to check more rigorously how well the school is doing and give your teachers more responsibility for leading individual subjects because we think they will do a really good job.

You can help your teachers by continuing to attend every day and continuing to work as hard as you do.

I send you all my best wishes for the future and wish you success with your Christmas production. Your singing sounded lovely!

Yours sincerely

Joy Frost

Her Majesty's Inspector