

Vane Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114206
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325964
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Mary Sewell

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)	296
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 Chris Foster
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Tobin
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Vane Road Newton Aycliffe County Durham DL5 5RH
Telephone number	01325 300380
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Vane Road Primary School is a larger than average primary school occupying two separate buildings but is designated as a single site. Most pupils are of White British heritage and there are a few pupils from minority ethnic groups but none who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to claim free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who have a statement of special educational need, is below average. 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

Vane Road Primary provides a good education for all its pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and find it a 'welcoming, friendly and caring school' where their children 'thrive'.

When children enter Reception they have skills below those typical for their age group, but with some aspects of language and number skills much lower than expected. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly average last year but they have improved this year. By the end of Year 6, standards are currently above average in English, mathematics and science with many reaching the higher levels in all three subjects. This represents good achievement for all pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. This is due to the school's effective inclusion policy and the way it places pupils at the heart of its work. There has been improvement to standards since the last inspection because of more rigorous monitoring strategies, curricular initiatives to raise standards in reading and writing and a greater focus on accelerating pupil progress. As a result, both standards and achievement have risen steadily over the last three years.

Pupils love coming to school and attend regularly. 'It is brilliant here, learning is fun!' Teaching and learning are consistently good and frequently outstanding. Staff work well as a team, sharing their expertise and sharing their knowledge of new initiatives. Pupils learn well because they know exactly what is expected of them. They feel safe and happy and are well motivated to learn because lessons are enlivened with a range of activities which inspire creativity and teamwork. Occasionally, some opportunities are missed to extend the teaching of letters and sounds into the children's independent activities. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not always have sufficient opportunity to set out their own mathematical work, because this is done for them on worksheets.

The school works well with outside agencies to ensure pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive appropriate help. Pupils benefit extremely well from the good quality care, guidance and support they receive and love the many opportunities to take on responsibilities, which they say makes them 'much more confident'. By the time they reach Year 6, they can express their views in a mature and articulate manner. They have a sound understanding of a healthy lifestyle, love the new school menus and take part in lots of additional sports. The school's Activemark confirms this. Information from the system for tracking pupils' progress is not used consistently by all staff when they are planning lessons. The curriculum is good. It has variety, appeals to all learning styles and incorporates and extends the pupils' own interests, especially in music and sport. It provides pupils with very effective basic skills, good personal development, an appetite for learning and an ability to cooperate with others.

Leadership and management are good. The senior team lead the school very well in its drive to raise standards and achievement. The governors, headteacher and staff are increasing the pace of improvement by more closely monitoring the work of the school. Governance is very effective and governors are fully involved in all aspects of school life. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has good capacity to make further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. When children begin Reception their skills are below those typical for this age group, particularly in language and number. When they leave, their skills are generally average, with personal and physical development exceeding expectations. Writing continues to be below what is expected for the age of the children. This overall good progress is the result of good provision, particularly in teaching which is good and often outstanding. The two class teachers work effectively together and create a vibrant environment indoors and out. There are plenty of resources, which are well organised for easy independent access. Activities are imaginative and engage the children because they incorporate their ideas and extend their abilities well. Numbers, letters and sounds are well taught. Although number knowledge is consolidated throughout the day's activities, letters and sounds rarely feature in children's independent activities. Staff provide a good standard of care and ensure safe hygiene procedures such as hand washing are followed. The curriculum is well balanced between child initiated and teacher-led activities. Assessment is ongoing and used effectively in future planning. Induction and transfer to Year 1 arrangements are well organised and communication with parents is regular. Parents are helped to support their children's education effectively. Reception is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that systems for tracking pupils' progress are implemented consistently by all staff.
- In Years 1 and 2, ensure pupils have more opportunities to set out mathematical work independently.
- Extend teaching of letters and sounds through children's independent activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and, considering the below average level on entry, pupils achieve well. Current standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are slightly above expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. This is an improvement on previous years when standards were broadly average in all subjects. This rise is the result of improvements in teaching and learning. Additional specialist help with writing and initiatives in reading have also been very successful in raising standards. Results in national tests in 2008 at the end of Year 6 were broadly average but they have risen this year. Pupils currently in Year 6 have made good progress since Year 2. School data and inspection evidence show that they are on track to reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science in this year's tests, with many achieving the higher levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make comparable progress to their peer. Standards and achievement have risen steadily over the last three years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good, as is pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils know their views and ideas are always considered and frequently incorporated into school life. Pupils attend regularly because they love school, feel safe and behave well. They have positive attitudes because staff are friendly, supportive and vigilant. Pupils eat healthily and are active and especially love the 'Trim Trail.' Their access to 'buddy'

systems has helped pupils develop emotionally and become more considerate of each other and feel safe in school. Pupils enjoy responsibilities and are proud to represent the school in the community, singing carols, raising money for charity or by participating in inter-school events. Although they study French and learn about different religions and countries, they have limited experience of life in other cultures. Projects such as the 'Woodham CTC Newspaper Challenge' improve pupils' interpersonal skills and their ability to handle money. Pupils leave school with very effective basic skills, an enthusiasm for learning and the ability to work well with others. These attributes prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Some lessons observed were outstanding. The pace of learning has begun to quicken because teachers are more focused on how individual pupils learn. Teachers have good subject knowledge and most track pupils' progress consistently and set challenging learning targets. Pupils who need additional help are quickly identified and are well supported in small groups by well qualified teaching assistants. This results in lessons which are well planned to meet individual needs and interests. In the best lessons, the activities are exciting and challenging, the pace of learning brisk and business like which keeps pupils interested. In the outstanding lessons, pupils thrive because activities constantly challenge, motivate and inspire. In one such lesson, Year 5 pupils designed their own assessment criteria for editing a film review and rapid progress was made in understanding journalistic features. In less effective lessons, learning targets are unclear, there is insufficient challenge and as a result the pace of learning slackens. In some classes, the development of mathematical concepts and presentation is limited because of the overuse of pre-prepared materials such as worksheets. Marking is thorough, and produces good guidance but there is little opportunity in some classes for pupils to redraft and respond to marking directions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad, balanced and meets all statutory requirements. It is made relevant to different abilities by booster classes, special programmes and well matched activities. Pupils study exciting projects, which link subjects creatively. An example of this can be seen in the detailed study of toy design by Year 5 pupils, following a visit to a training centre. This visit developed both their information and communication technology and their design technology skills. All pupils have access to recorder and ocarina lessons and there are additional instrumental lessons for talented and keen pupils. There is a good range of sporting tuition, including ballroom dancing. The more able pupils are given appropriate challenges in lessons. Excitement and variety are added through specialist teaching, for example drama and French and after-school clubs, visitors and visits. Pupils are especially enthusiastic about their involvement with a local arts project, 'Aycliffe's Giant Head', which has given them the opportunity to work with the sculptor and engineers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All statutory requirements are met relating to safeguarding, child protection and health and safety. Good systems are in place to keep risk assessment training updated and to incorporate new developments. Vulnerable children are well supported through initiatives including the 'Getting Along Programme' which supports emotional and personal development. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and intervention strategies meet their needs appropriately, ensuring they make comparable progress to their peers. There is an effective programme for social and emotional development which supports good personal development for all pupils. An efficient tracking system, which incorporates standard assessment data and teachers' assessment, identifies children who need to catch up and for those who need specific input, further support is provided. The tracking system is accessible to all staff but not all use it consistently.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the headteacher, staff and governors are good. The leadership team have been very successful in fostering good parental relationships because they ensure that pupils are at the heart of the school agenda. Middle leaders have benefited from highly effective professional development and training. They are confidently using a robust system of monitoring to evaluate pupils' performance. This has led to an increased understanding of areas of the curriculum or teaching which need improvement.

The governors are knowledgeable about the school's performance and add to the school's self-evaluation effectively. They use data and general information to make best use of the budget and other resources. They play a key role in supporting and challenging the leadership team and provide valuable links with the local community, including industry. They identify strongly with the school and have worked with headteacher and staff to promote a high standard of welfare, good community cohesion and a good education for all pupils. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and has good capacity for further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

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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	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?	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	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

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

15 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Vane Road Primary School, Durham, DL5 5RH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. You were all so helpful, friendly and polite. We want to say a really big 'thank you' to all of you who gave up some of your lunchtime to come and talk to us, especially the Year 6 pupils who had been in a test before lunch.

We would like to tell you what we found out about your school. Your school is a good school, which you all told us you love to attend. When you come into school some of you need to do some catching up in language and numeracy but you do this very quickly because your lessons are good. They are fun with lots of interesting activities for you to do. By the time you leave school you are producing work of a good standard. We saw how well you behaved and cared for each other in your lessons and in the playground. It was lovely watching you enjoy your 'Trim Trail'.

Your teachers and other staff take great care of you and make your time at school interesting with exciting opportunities and experiences. You told us how much you enjoyed taking on responsibilities as playground buddies, school councillors and monitors. Your school is well managed by your governors, headteacher and senior teachers.

We have asked them to improve three things. We would like the boys and girls in Reception to experiment with their letters and sounds in lessons when they use other activities. We would like pupils in Years 1 and 2 to set out their own work in numeracy much more so as to improve how their work is presented and speed up their learning of mathematics.

Finally, your school has a lot of information about you and we have asked your teachers to look at this carefully and use it in a different way. This will help them give you work which really makes you think hard!

We would like to take this opportunity of wishing you all the very best in the future.

Yours faithfully

Mary Sewell

Lead inspector