

Red Row First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122197
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327656
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Bannon

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	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	94
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 Lorna Patterson
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Brett
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Red Row Morpeth Northumberland NE61 5AS
Telephone number	01670 760282
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Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves a village of considerable social and economic deprivation in an ex-mining area of Northumberland. The pupil population is fairly static and predominantly from White British families. There are no pupils who have English as their second language. There is a higher percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery and a Reception class. The school has received the Healthy Schools award every year since 2003 and has recently achieved the Activemark for sport.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Red Row First School is a good school. The strong leadership skills of the headteacher ensure that it is a warm and welcoming environment where pupils are well cared for and progress well. There is high praise from parents for the way the school deals with challenging behaviour and encourages friendships and respect amongst pupils. From well below average starting points, particularly in their social and emotional development and personal skills, pupils leave school at the end of Year 4 with broadly average standards, although these fluctuate. The standards of pupils in the current Year 4 are as expected for their age, and this demonstrates good achievement from when they began school. In Year 2, pupils exceeded their targets in reading, writing and mathematics in 2008. Although attainment was below average this was good progress from their entry to Nursery. Whilst achievement in literacy and numeracy is generally good, there is some variation from year to year. This is because the teaching of literacy and numeracy lacks clear direction from middle leaders on a day-to-day basis.

Personal development is good. The school's constant innovation in providing support for parents as well as pupils, combined with an exciting and relevant curriculum ensures that attendance is average and that, by the time they leave school, pupils are confident individuals well prepared for the future. Pupils behave well and enjoy school. They cooperate well and reflect on what they do. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils want to learn, particularly when, for example, visitors such as a talented artist specialising in wood-carving captures their imagination and they enhance their own skills. Pupils make a strongly positive contribution to the community. They plant flowers and tend the school gardens. They come up with ideas for the sensory garden and choose equipment for outdoors. Pupils act safely and sensibly. They show evidence of a healthy lifestyle, for example, by being fully involved in yoga lessons showing excellent knowledge of the positions.

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Safeguarding procedures are in place and meet current requirements. Excellent links with partner institutions provide high levels of support for vulnerable pupils and an enriched curriculum throughout their time in school. Literacy and numeracy are gradually becoming more embedded across other subjects to ensure a good and improving curriculum but this process needs to be quicker and monitored more thoroughly.

Teaching and learning are good. Most teaching seen was good or outstanding because teachers had high expectations. They provide opportunities for each individual because they are ably supported by teaching assistants to offer challenge at a personal level for all pupils including those of higher ability and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Accurate tracking and good advice on how to improve mean pupils generally make good progress.

Leadership and management are good. With the support of a strong and improving governing body, the school has improved to the point where pupil progress is good. Whilst there have been some lengthy absences of key staff to contend with, the school has continued to meet challenging targets and provide a good standard of education and care for pupils. Now that staffing has stabilised and new appointments are in place, the school is set to improve even more. The determination of an exceptionally resolute and innovative headteacher ensures a truly inclusive environment where pupils achieve equally well. For all these reasons the capacity to improve is good. Community cohesion has focused on the immediate locality and is satisfactory. The school has good plans to widen its scope.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Skills on entry into Nursery are usually well below those typical for their age. There are particular weaknesses in social and emotional development. By the time they leave Reception, children currently reach the levels expected of five-year-olds in all areas of learning. There has been considerable improvement in their personal skills and in language development because of the good quality teaching that they regularly receive. This represents good progress from entry. Teachers' planning is good. There is good deployment of teaching assistants so that all children are given ample opportunities to take part in lessons so that they learn and develop well. The facilities are excellent. There is a large classroom with enough space for three different year groups to be taught separately or together. The large outdoor area has many very good features, such as a gazebo and adventure areas. Suitable waterproof clothing enables children to access them in the rain. Visitors also enhance learning. During the inspection the children played out a wedding scenario, very effectively set up by a visitor who regularly comes in to the school to enhance spirituality and reflection. Learning was swift because the bride and bridegroom were dressed accordingly and staff showed good skills in promoting numeracy and social skills during the 'wedding meal'. Children learn well because of the close adult support and the realistic and meaningful experiences they receive. The welfare of children is good because adults are appropriately trained and risk assessments are in place. Staff assess children thoroughly and accurately. This has become more rigorous of late under the new leadership team which has already established clear priorities for future developments.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen middle leadership so that there is more direction on a day-to-day basis in order to raise standards, especially in literacy and numeracy.
- Improve pupils' awareness of the diverse cultures and communities in the United Kingdom and the wider world.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. In 2008, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 for pupils in Year 2 were lower than in 2007, but higher than the trough experienced in 2006. Standards exceeded expectations from prior performance in reading, writing and mathematics. This represented good achievement for most pupils. Currently, Year 2 pupils are making good progress although standards are still below average. In 2008, pupils left Year 4 with standards that were below average across the main subjects. As their skills on entry to the Nursery were well below average and performance had been particularly low when they were in Year 2, this represented good progress. Pupils now in Year 4 are making very good progress. This is because they are being consistently well taught across the curriculum and standards in mathematics, reading and writing are in line with those expected for their age. Though achievement in literacy and numeracy is generally good, there is some variation from year to year. This is because the teaching of literacy and numeracy sometimes lacks clear direction.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. There is a strong focus on spiritual development with good links to local churches and visits from an outstanding visiting speaker who encourages reflection very successfully. Pupils are open and honest, and they cooperate well. Attendance is broadly average. The school is a happy place where pupils enjoy the rich experiences on offer and achieve well. They appreciate visits to the theatre and Alnwick Gardens and delight in talking about what they do. Despite a few instances of difficult behaviour, pupils generally behave well and in the best lessons show a real thirst for learning. They take part readily in at least two hours of physical education a week and eat fruit every day. Pupils are sensible around the school and look after each other. Most pupils take a strong pride in their school; for example, the gardens are tended regularly. Concerts are arranged for the elderly and school assemblies performed for parents and productions for the community. Pupils have raised money for equipment for the school grounds and played a major role in choosing what that should be. They are well prepared for their move to middle school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Most of the teaching seen during the inspection was either good or outstanding. This was because the work was personalised and clearly targeted towards the pupils' needs. Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They demand that pupils give their utmost in terms of attitudes and standards. The splitting of Years 3 and 4 into two groups by ability has proved to be a masterstroke with highly skilled teachers stretching pupils to achieve their potential. As a consequence, learning has been exciting, such as when the most able pupils discussed whether the author Roald Dahl's background influenced the way he wrote and which characters the readers were meant to admire. Other pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked enthusiastically in mathematics to link the operations of multiplication and division. They gained confidence and accuracy, understanding readily because the teacher explained very well how to calculate half of a large number by breaking it down. One of the strengths in all of the teaching seen was the way that teachers managed some instances of difficult behaviour. Only very occasionally, when teachers talked for a little too long to entire groups, did pupils become restless and learning reduce to satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good progress made by the pupils is rooted in an exciting curriculum enriched by the excellent use of visitors, such as a wood carver and a yoga teacher. Pupils respond well to the good provision on offer. They see the relevance of what they learn in their lives now and in the future. Some pupils with behavioural difficulties particularly appreciate the range of activities on offer which includes a range of sports and visits. The curriculum not only encourages pupils to achieve well but also to enhance their personal skills. Although still developing, the curriculum now better underpins the learning of basic skills, including literacy and numeracy across subjects. The local authority has been very supportive in providing laptop computers and the expertise to go with them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils feel safe. They each have a member of staff who looks after them. Child protection and risk assessments are all in place. The staff work very hard for their pupils and are passionate about improving chances for the pupils. Arrangements for transition to the next stage of education are good. The new special needs coordinator is effective in bringing new ideas to improve the chances of all pupils and recognises the need to be more rigorous in evaluating how well innovations support learning. Staff track pupils' progress accurately and marking is useful. Pupils are given good advice on how to improve. Links with partner institutions are very strong and play a vital role in supporting vulnerable pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has shown exceptional determination and strong leadership skills to ensure that pupils make good progress. She has a strategic approach to the school's development and is innovative in improving the environment. She has reacted calmly to difficulties, in particular a high level of staff absence, and put measures in place that have been highly successful. She has inspired supply teachers and support staff and they are serving the pupils well. Middle leadership has been less effective largely because there have been some lengthy absences of key staff to contend with. Nevertheless, challenging targets are being met and expectations of staff and pupils are high. Governance is now strong. Governors know the school very well. While holding the school to account they have been effective in supporting the headteacher well in practical ways such as ensuring building work is done and providing behavioural support.

The school is exceptionally inclusive. The school has welcomed and accepted some pupils who have found it difficult to settle elsewhere because of their challenging behaviour. All pupils achieve equally well because of the school's success in promoting all pupils' personal development. Community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has good plans to develop this further but thus far has focused its efforts on improving links locally. Parents who responded to the questionnaire think very highly of the school. The school has been very innovative in putting on a variety of courses for parents. It constantly works hard to engage parents and help them to develop strategies to support their children and play a more active part in their learning and progress. The school currently gives good value for money. It has improved since the last inspection and is in a good position to improve 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?	1
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	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	3
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	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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**

29 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Red Row First School, Northumberland, NE61 5AS

I thoroughly enjoyed my inspection of your school. It was a pleasure to meet you, your teachers and all the staff at the school.

Your school provides you with a good education. You enjoy school and do well there. I know that you enjoy the visitors, such as the yoga teacher, the artist and the religious studies teacher who make the activities so interesting. You show a good respect for your friends, the staff and the school grounds. I am particularly impressed with the way that you look after the gardens and make decisions about choosing equipment for the outdoor area. Although there is a wide range of things to do, you are safe because the staff take such good care of you.

You enjoy a good start to your life in school because you make good progress very early in Nursery and Reception. You all benefit because the headteacher and the staff make sure that your parents are involved in knowing what you are doing. You can help keep your parents interested in your work by telling them what you are doing at school even though you may soon be leaving for the middle school. The teachers work hard for you and make lessons interesting. They are able to do this because there are enough teaching assistants to give you individual help if you need it.

The headteacher has worked very hard and been successful in making sure that you develop well as young people and make good progress in lessons. Despite this, some of you need to have better skills in numeracy and literacy. The headteacher has plans to organise the school so that you will have more opportunities to practise these in more of your lessons.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours faithfully

Peter Bannon

Lead inspector