

# Hexham East First School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122203
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	327659
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	0
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 Fiona Armstrong
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Judith Meek
<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>	Beaufront Avenue Hexham Northumberland NE46 1JD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01434 603467
<b>Fax number</b>	01434 605250

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<b>Age group</b>	3–9
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 June 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than most schools. It serves pupils from the immediate locality and about a third live outside the catchment area. The school houses a dedicated language unit for 12 pupils. Most pupils who attend come from an area where social-economic factors are below average. Almost one third of pupils are eligible for a free school meal. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low and none are at an early stage of speaking English. Half the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities including the 10% who have a statement of special educational need. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage receive part-time provision in the Nursery and full-time in the Reception class. There is a before and after school club on site, run by a private provider, which was inspected separately by Ofsted.

## 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 with outstanding leadership and high levels of care, guidance and support. A caring ethos permeates all aspects of school life. Consequently, pupils feel very safe because they know every adult knows them well. In this fully inclusive school, everyone is valued; as one parent wrote, 'The active language unit is an asset to the school and more able children recognise the person behind the individual.' Pupils are well mannered, polite and compassionate. These personal qualities prepare them well for the future. Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy the range of learning opportunities offered. The exceptional leadership of the headteacher has successfully ensured that all staff work as a united team for the benefit of all.

Standards at the end of Year 4 are well above average representing good achievement from a below average entry into the school. Progress in Key Stage 1 is good. At the end of Year 2, standards in writing are exceptionally high. This is because pupils regularly practise their skills in writing across all subjects. In mathematics and reading, standards are above average. However, in reading, not enough pupils reach the higher Level 3. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those who have a statement of special educational need, achieve extremely well. Pupils of above average ability reach their targets.

Teaching and learning are consistently good. Relationships between adults and pupils are good; consequently, pupils try hard with their work. All pupils are very well supported in small groups during lessons. This good support from either teachers or assistants ensures pupils' learning is secure and accelerates their progress. The good curriculum gives priority to literacy and numeracy. Recent developments include a topic approach to learning. This makes learning more meaningful. Pupils are extremely well cared for. Their progress is tracked very closely so those who are not achieving as well as expected are quickly identified and given extra support. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included and supported well to help them achieve. Those in the language unit have individual teaching targeted to their needs and are integrated well in the classes for the afternoon sessions.

Leadership and management are outstanding, especially in the development of the school since the last inspection. The calm, caring and purposeful leadership of the headteacher has ensured that all staff work with a clear aim to provide the very best for all pupils. Senior leaders demonstrate their determination through rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school. The school has very strong links and partnerships within the community and readily embraces new initiatives and external support. As a result, the school is involved in various projects including an exciting garden project and projects to enhance parental involvement in the school. Governors have a good understanding of the work of the school and provide a good level of support and challenge. Community cohesion is good. Global and local links are well developed; links to improve pupils' understanding of the different faiths and cultures in British society are less well developed. Issues identified in the previous inspection have been tackled very well and therefore the capacity to improve is good. The school provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Provision is good and meets the needs of all children. When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage unit, their skills and abilities are varied. Overall they are below those typical

for their age, particularly in their personal development and early literacy skills. The strong emphasis on play-based learning has resulted in children being actively involved in all they do. They are well motivated and excited about activities that involve, for example, gardening or bird watching. They thoroughly enjoy listening to stories and understand how to find one number less than the previous one. By the end of Reception, standards in all areas of learning are as expected for their age. The school has begun to teach letters and sounds, but does not allocate enough regular time to this aspect to ensure children make enough progress in early reading and writing. Teaching is good because adults interact sensitively and offer children strong support. Relationships are very good; consequently, children behave well and are clear about right and wrong. The balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities is well planned and is underpinned by regular assessment based on observation. Children are extremely well cared for and learn in a happy and safe environment. The spacious areas both indoors and outside are used to offer a good range of activities through which children pursue independent learning because the activities provided have a clear learning focus. Children's welfare is extremely well promoted so children quickly settle. At times, parents are invited to stay and play with their children. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The leader is new to the school but has already worked with the team to bring about relevant changes to the provision, including a stronger emphasis on play-based learning. All staff are clear about what is done well and what needs to improve, including additional attention to sounds and letter recognition.

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

- Improve standards in reading in Key Stage 1 to enable more pupils to gain the higher Level 3.
- Ensure pupils develop better understanding of the different faiths and cultures in British society.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are well above average at the end of Year 4 and pupils' achievement is good. This is because teaching is consistently good throughout resulting in continued good progress from a broadly average starting point when pupils enter Year 1. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards in the 2008 national tests were significantly above average and have been so for three out of the last four years. The school has very small year groups in which the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities varies; therefore, standards within subjects fluctuate from time to time. Nevertheless, pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have a statement of special educational needs achieve exceptionally well and make very good progress because they are well supported in small groups. The best overall progress is in writing because pupils use their skills across the curriculum. In reading not enough pupils reach the higher Level 3. Girls achieve better than boys, however, the school has developed strategies to address the gap by matching the curriculum better to boys' needs. School data show improvements to the attainment of pupils of above average ability. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve well. Pupils in the language unit make good progress because the activities provided are targeted to their specific needs. Some return to their mainstream school.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. By the time they leave the school, pupils are compassionate and confident individuals. Behaviour is good. Pupils have a firm grasp of right and wrong because school policies are consistently applied. Pupils show good respect for the natural environment and are proud of their school, the grounds and garden areas. Following visits by the school council to other schools, new initiatives including monitors, prefects and playground buddies have been introduced. Older pupils look after younger ones in assembly and at playtime and playground buddies are always on hand to help out. Attendance is above average and pupils particularly enjoy the subjects taught in the school day and the range of after-school activities. Pupils know it is important to eat healthy food and exercise regularly but are not always clear about why this is so. They enjoy learning to swim and taking part in a range of sporting activities in school and beyond the school day. Pupils say they feel very safe in school because they have good friends, so no one is left out and they know every adult well. Pupils are ambitious and cite a range of jobs they would like to do. They are well prepared and confident about going to the next school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are consistently good and this accounts for the good progress made. Teachers make sure the work provided matches the individual learner. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. As a result, pupils work hard and are confident that adults will help if they get stuck with their work. Teaching assistants are knowledgeable and because many classes are small, pupils get as much individual attention as they need. This accelerates their learning and deepens their understanding. Teachers demonstrate and explain new ideas using a variety of strategies and resources, including technology. They offer a good range of practical and purposeful activities. This ensures that pupils of different abilities understand new learning. Teachers mark books regularly and provide meaningful feedback. In some lessons, good use is made of 'talk partners' to enhance the use of new vocabulary, but this practice is not used consistently across the school.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good curriculum is being modernised and reorganised to provide a greater breadth of interesting learning opportunities to engage and motivate both boys and girls alike. Pupils especially like learning through topics and this enables them to develop and apply an array of skills. Good priority is given to literacy and numeracy across subjects; activities for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively planned so that the needs of individuals are well met. Pupils enjoy a range of subjects and their work adorns the corridors as examples to motivate and stimulate others. They particularly like 'Golden Time' where they can choose to take part in their favourite activities. The school provides many cultural and creative experiences through a range of after-school clubs, visits and visitors. Strong links through local partnerships have resulted in pupils being supported to develop a school garden. The good range of activities widens pupils' horizons and does much for their personal development.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The extremely caring ethos of the school promotes enjoyment and achievement, and each pupil feels highly valued. Most benefit from working in small supported groups. The levels of support and attention to pupils' welfare are outstanding; parents understandably hold this in high regard. Good procedures are in place to ensure the safeguarding of pupils and to promote their safety and well-being. The systems for tracking progress are thorough and there is very good communication within the school about each pupil. The school has recently adopted a new and successful system for assessing pupils' progress in writing. This school is now ready to use the same system for mathematics. Pupils know exactly what they have to think about next in their work. They say, 'We read the teacher's message at the end of our work and correct mistakes.' They assess their own work against their individual targets. There are very effective links with agencies to ensure high quality support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants are well trained and experienced and used very effectively in supporting learning. Close links with the local middle school ensure that transition is smooth.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The calm and purposeful leadership of the headteacher has empowered the senior team and all staff to undertake their responsibilities efficiently and develop the school apace. As a result, standards are consistently high and the progress of each pupil is carefully monitored. Everyone in the school works enthusiastically as a united team for the benefit of its pupils. The school willingly embraces new ideas and regularly evaluates the impact of new projects on pupils' learning. This is one of the reasons why the gap between boys' and girls' achievement is beginning to narrow. Self-evaluation is detailed and focuses on the right areas for improvement. This is because it is rooted in accurate monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity and makes very good use of staff and resources to ensure that all pupils achieve successfully. The school's provision for community cohesion is good. It has good links within the locality and the international scene, but few links to improve pupils' understanding of the diversity of British society. Governors are very knowledgeable, loyal and supportive of the school. They undertake their role seriously and hold the school to account. They are not fully involved in self-evaluation. The school has improved very well since the last inspection and has good capacity to further improve.





## 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?	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	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	1

<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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
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?	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**

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hexham East First School, Northumberland, NE45 1JD

I very much enjoyed the two days I spent in your school. You are very well mannered and friendly. It is good to see you growing up into confident and compassionate young people. I was impressed with the enthusiasm you have for your school grounds and garden. You clearly enjoy developing them.

Yours is a good school. I know most of you work very hard and it is good to see you getting high test results especially in your writing. I know you really enjoy this subject and I know you have good chances to write across many subjects in your topic work. However, in reading not enough of you are achieving at the higher levels, so I have asked the school to help you here. You in turn must practise harder at school and try to read at home too, if you can.

I was pleased to see how well behaved you are in your lessons and around the school. You are also helpful with one another when one of your classmates gets stuck. This is a kind way to be and it also helps everyone learn faster. I know you feel very safe and secure in school because there are buddies on hand to ensure no one is left out and staff take excellent care of you.

I know your teachers work very hard to provide interesting work for you. Teachers know you very well and try to match your work to your individual ability. Your work that is displayed around the school shows how well you are doing in all subjects. I particularly like your beautiful art displays. I know you have good links with local schools and businesses and also with schools abroad. I have asked the school to help you find out more about our diverse British society.

Thank you again for being so helpful. I hope you enjoy going to your Middle School.

Yours faithfully

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector