

Netherton Northside First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122211
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327660
Inspection date	17 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Derek Sleightholme

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)	15
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 Judie Freeman
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Joyner
Date of previous school inspection	16 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Netherton Rothbury Morpeth Northumberland NE65 7HD
Telephone number	01669 630234
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Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very small rural village school. All pupils are White British. The percentage eligible for free school meals is average. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision covers Nursery (part-time) and Reception. These children are taught in a class with pupils from Year 1.

The headteacher, who joined the school two months ago, shares responsibility between this and another local school through the agreement of governors.

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, including their spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. 'We are very lucky to have such a good school', is a written comment that typifies most parents' positive views of the school.

Pupils become well-rounded and responsible members of the school family. They show considerable care for each other and they respect the adults who they regard as friendly and supportive. Consequently, they are very settled, happy and feel very safe. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and their attendance is above average. Their enthusiasm for sport has helped the school gain 'Healthy School' status. Pupils' suggestions about how outdoor facilities might be improved demonstrate their strong contribution to the school. Pupils love school, find the lessons highly enjoyable and value the good extra-curricular opportunities. One remarked, 'There is nothing I would change about this school!'

Achievement is good. All pupils achieve equally well. Pupil numbers are very small and vary from year-to-year currently ranging from one to six pupils. This leads to marked variation in standards and caution is needed when comparing results to national averages. Pupils enter Year 1 broadly average. Progress is good and the trend is that standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and much higher than is expected by the end of Year 4. Historically progress in writing has been a little slower than that in reading and mathematics. Actions to improve this subject have impacted positively and progress is now even across subjects. Given pupils' good progress in basic skills they are well prepared to cope with life ahead.

Teaching and learning are good, hence the reason why pupils make good progress. Pupils are challenged well. Lively exposition and appealing methods keeps them alert and attentive. Lessons start positively and are developed at a good pace. The engaging content of the good curriculum is well received by pupils who respond enthusiastically. Competent planning that makes effective links between subjects, ensures topics have wide appeal, and contributes to pupils' good cultural development. Marking is not always sufficiently precise in guiding pupils to further success.

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils benefit from high quality personal attention because the adults know them as individuals and there is some exemplary practice that enables pupils to feel safe. Procedures that contribute to pupils' safety and security are fully in place. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from the personal support provided by skilled assistants and the school's good links with external professionals. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Although pupils benefit from individual supportive discussions with adults the guidance they receive is not leading them to a firm understanding of targets and what to work towards.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The recently appointed headteacher, working with a small but enthusiastic staff team, provides good direction. There is a drive for success permeating leadership at all levels. Thorough self-evaluation provides them with a mostly accurate picture of the school. The school runs smoothly and efficiently and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good. Children's personal development is outstanding. The very low number of children starting Nursery has a wide range of skills and abilities that vary from below to above what is expected for their age. Starting points in communication and personal and social skills are regularly lower. Progress is good from their individual starting points. Overall standards as pupils leave Reception are broadly average and above for the ones who have started school with skills that are typical for their age. Most children shown rapid gains personally as they quickly learn to listen to the instructions and become acquainted with the daily routines. Children form good relationships with those in Year 1 taught in the same setting. They make friends readily and behave very well. They become confident speakers and independent learners.

Learning is good because teaching is good. The provision is well planned and organised reflecting all of the required areas of learning. Outdoor facilities allow children to experience sand and water, engage in role-play and drive wheeled vehicles. Very small numbers and the responsibility to respond to children's specific needs make it difficult for staff to provide sufficient independent activities. Consequently, the balance is sometimes skewed too much to adult-led provision. A good standard of welfare is promoted through general vigilance, consistent systems, and regular assessments. Leadership is good. By completing an early audit of provision the leader has recognised the need to increase opportunities for children to make choices and become more independent as they learn.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum so that children have more opportunities to develop their learning independently.
- Improve the academic guidance to pupils providing greater clarity through marking and on the targets they are expected to work towards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Pupils start Year 1 with variable starting points although often they are average. They make good progress and the typical pattern, repeated again this year, is that by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. In the 2008 national assessments there were only four pupils in Year 2. Their combined reading, writing and mathematics assessments were above average. They made good progress from average starting points on entry to Year 1.

Progress continues to be good and by end of Year 4 standards in English, mathematics and science are much higher than is expected for their age. Many pupils produce work more typical of eleven-year-old pupils. More able pupils are challenged well. In 2008 only two pupils were in Year 4 and their optional tests showed both made good progress when compared with their individual starting points. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress benefiting from the personal care, support and attention provided sensitively by skilled teaching assistants.

Three key factors contribute to the good progress; the good teaching, the lively engaging curriculum and the generous staff to pupil ratio that allows for more individual attention to meet each pupil's varying needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Their cultural development is good. During their time at school pupils become extremely polite, respectful and reflective. They talk very confidently and maturely about life at school. They speak with understanding about the 'Seed for Africa' fundraising project. Pupils care for each other as close friends and naturally support each other. They know and value each other exceptionally well and their social interactions in the playground are excellent. Pupils' behaviour is hard to fault. They are thrilled to take part in school activities because they find lessons highly enjoyable.

Pupils are very proud of the success of the vegetables they are growing in their school garden, checking them each day and eagerly anticipating the outcome of the potato growing competition. They are in no doubt that eating fresh vegetables and salads, combined with daily exercise, help them to be fit and healthy. Pupils say they feel very safe. In this very small school they totally trust the adults who they know will support them personally. Pupils' contribution to their school 'family' is excellent. A strength is their monthly community lunch that they share with adults from the immediate locality. Given pupils' progress in key skills pupils they are well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. The small teaching groups and the high level of individual attention foster pupils' good learning. The combination of good classroom management and pupils' very positive attitudes means lessons start promptly and learning develops seamlessly. The good teaching is founded on confident subject knowledge, warm relationships and high expectations. Lessons are planned well and conducted at a good pace. Teaching has embraced the potential of technology and the interactive facility and laptop computers are used well to enhance learning.

Basic skills are taught well. Learning in one subject is skilfully linked to activities in others. For example, as pupils learn in history about the marauding exploits of the Vikings they also practise their mathematical division skills to calculate how the 'spoils' from the raids can be shared equally. Pupils benefit from verbal feedback and guidance provided to them in lessons. A weakness is that although pupils' written work is marked regularly and acknowledges success, it does not provide them with sufficient guidance on how make it even better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The appealing activities stimulate pupils to learn and contribute well to their acquisition of knowledge and skills. Leaders ensure, by monitoring planning, that a good balance is provided between ensuring priority is given to progress in basic skills and enrichment experiences that provide opportunities for these to be applied in meaningful ways. Topics are lively and interesting. The current 'seaside' topic, that has included a visit to a coastal village and a boat excursion, provides learning experiences that add to pupils' first-hand knowledge of their immediate locality. Improvements in information and communication technology (ICT) resources are such that there is almost one computer for each pupil.

A particular strength of the good range of after-school clubs is the longstanding focus on developing musical skills. All children play an instrument and their contribution to the ceilidh band is exceptional. Firm plans, in partnership with local schools, are in place to extend the curriculum so that it becomes more creative.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. 'The staff provide a very happy, safe and smooth running environment for the children and for that we thank them' is a view expressed by a parent that summarises the excellent pastoral care. Safeguarding, child protection and risk assessments procedures meet requirements. Support for pupils with specific learning needs is excellent. The highly individualised approach helps pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make similar good progress to other pupils. The school works very well with specialists representing a range of outside agencies to support pupils with specific needs. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked and targets are set. However, pupils have limited understanding of the targets they are working towards and guidance on them is not fully developed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher provides good direction and positive teamwork. Working effectively together the headteacher, staff and governors are very committed to further development of provision. Important outcomes are that pupils make good progress academically and very good progress personally. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection and there is good capacity for further development. Leaders set challenging targets on the assumption that pupils will make faster than expected progress. Governors provide good support. They challenge the school well through their regular planned monitoring visits to assess progress with action plan targets and probe themes that are potential areas for further development. They work successfully with school leaders to produce a mostly accurate audit of provision.

Leaders evaluate and promote community cohesion well. They have completed a good audit that has helped them to strengthen pupils' understanding of their place in school and the local community. Good examples of their impact are the sense of belonging to a community. Pupils collaborate as a whole council to have a voice in school and discuss their contribution to local rural village shows. Leaders have firm plans to link pupils to a school in an urban setting and internationally with a school in New Zealand.

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?	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	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

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?	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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Netherton Northside First School, Northumberland,

NE65 7HD

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you, looking at your work and talking to you. You are friendly and courteous; thank you for helping us. We were impressed by your outstanding behaviour and good attendance. You are rightly proud of your school and regard it as one happy family.

These are the things we found out about your school during our visit. All the people who work in school are doing a very good job and it is a really happy place to be. Your personal development is outstanding. You feel very safe and know how to quickly access help. You love school activities and enjoy learning. You are clearly very skilled at growing vegetables and you know eating them and regular exercise will help you to stay healthy. Your ideas for improving the outdoor area show your views about school are valued. You receive excellent pastoral care and support. You are given satisfactory guidance on how to improve and the targets to work towards.

The school provides you with a good curriculum. You regard learning as fun and as a result you all make good progress throughout the school. You play your part by working hard in lessons. The standards you reach vary from year-to-year because you have wide ranging starting points. Currently, the standards in Year 4 are much higher than what is expected for that age. Well done!

There are two things the school could do better:

- improve the activities provided for children in the Nursery and Reception classes so that they have more opportunities to work independently
- improve the guidance you receive about your targets and ensure marking makes it clear to you how to improve your work.

Our very best wishes to you and all the staff who work with you.

Yours faithfully

Derek Sleightholme and Brian Goodall

Inspectors