

Mickley First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122219
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327662
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	60
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 Nigel Dolby
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Elvidge
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Mickley Stocksfield Northumberland NE43 7BG
Telephone number	01661 842269
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a below average-sized rural First School. It serves an area that is mixed socially and economically. A very small proportion of pupils are eligible for a free school meal. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) into a single age Reception class. There are two mixed-age classes also. There is a Nursery on-site and a breakfast club that are not managed by the school. The school has achieved Healthy School, Activemark and Eco Mark 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 with outstanding features in the pupils' personal development and well-being and their care, guidance and support. The aims of the school 'to provide an attractive, caring and calm learning environment where all members feel secure and comfortable' aptly sum up its work. It has a pivotal role to play in the local community through the good range of activities for everyone. Parents echo these judgements in their comments. For example, 'the school encourages old-fashioned community values which in this day and age is like a breath of fresh air' and 'the school has the best interests of the children and their families at heart'.

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Provisional results for the most recent Year 2 national assessments were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in mathematics have improved significantly over the past year. By the end of Year 4, pupils exceed their targets in reading, writing and mathematics in their end of year assessments. Pupils make good progress throughout their time in school. Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils love school and enjoy all the exciting and creative activities provided. Attendance is above average. Pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and keeping fit in their daily activity sessions. They say they feel safe and cared for in school. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and priority is given to promoting basic skills. Opportunities to apply literacy skills in other subjects are less well developed and this is a key priority for improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included in all that the school has to offer and also make good progress. However, support staff are not always given sufficient guidance to enable them to carry out their roles as effectively as possible in extending pupils' learning. Assessment is good. Pupils' work is marked very well and pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work. They have targets to work to and there are several innovative strategies to engage them fully in their learning. The good curriculum is enriched with many visits and visitors to support learning.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. As the leader for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the headteacher collaborates closely with parents and external agencies to ensure pupils are well supported. A rigorous tracking system to show pupils' progress is now in place and is used effectively by the headteacher to meet the individual needs of pupils. Pupils know there is someone to respond to their concerns in confidence.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has established a strong team and is working closely with the governing body. Constant reflection and review of the school's work by the headteacher and governors are ensuring that the school is moving forward. Priorities are very precisely identified and the actions taken to make improvements are having a good impact, as shown in the improved standards in mathematics last year. There is a good level of collaboration and consultation in reviewing and deciding school priorities. Improvement since the last inspection is good and the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the EYFS make good progress in their learning. When they start in the Reception class they are working at age-related expectations in all areas of learning and are achieving above national averages by the time they leave. A balanced range of activities indoors and

access to a small outdoor area are provided. A high priority is given to promoting early literacy skills, which enables children to talk and write about their play. For example, a small group of children confidently discussed being in school and took on their roles of teacher and pupils with confidence. Personal, social and emotional development is good. Children behave well, learn to share and build positive relationships with each other. Teaching is good. Opportunities to make informal assessments of children's progress are very comprehensive, but too complicated. There are missed opportunities to record children's learning in some adult-led activities, such as making a calendar, because they are not included in lesson plans. Welfare arrangements are excellent, as are those of the rest of the school. Parents are supportive and praise the smooth transition made by their children from the Nursery and onwards into Year 1. The headteacher is currently acting leader of the EYFS and inducting a new member of staff into this role.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve EYFS assessment arrangements so they consistently build a profile of children's progress in each area of learning, with evidence to support this.
- Provide support staff throughout the school more with guidance on how to extend pupils' learning.
- Ensure that curriculum plans state how pupils' literacy skills can be applied in subjects other than literacy.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good throughout Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 4. Results in the national assessments vary from year-to-year because of the small numbers of pupils in each year group, but overall provisional data showed a good improvement in 2008. Standards in reading and mathematics rose significantly compared to the previous years' results, but there was less improvement in writing, which has been accurately identified as a priority for development. However, standards remained above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly good progress. The inspection found that standards in writing show an improvement in Years 3 and 4.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Excellent attitudes to learning and enjoyment by all pupils prevail throughout the school. Parents too agree that their children are helped to, 'become more confident due to the excellent ethos of the school'. Behaviour is excellent and pupils show a keen interest in helping to improve the premises through their requests in the school council meetings. Pupils described many activities to help them stay healthy and fit, for example daily 'Activate' sessions, weekly swimming and a healthy school week. Strong links with the local community mean that various organisations come into school to help prepare pupils for their later lives and also to alert them to dangers. Pupils say they are safe in school and place a high value on the system that lets staff know if they have any worries or concerns. The 'Every Child Matters' agenda permeates the school and is welcomed by parents who say, 'Every child matters as an individual'. Pupils understand how important it is to protect the environment. This was well illustrated by a hedge planting project with a local environmental group. Achievement in the basic skills is given a high priority and equips pupils very well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good. Pupils are fully conversant with the targets set to help them understand how to improve their work. Marking is particularly good and helping to improve writing in literacy lessons. This is less apparent in writing in other subjects. Lessons are well planned and take good account of the range of abilities in each class. Clearly displayed learning objectives provide pupils with a good framework so they understand what to do. Lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils needing support have additional help, although there is insufficient guidance provided for support staff. Pupils enjoy learning and understand the importance of good behaviour. Informative displays provide very effective guidance and support for pupils when working independently. Parents are full of praise for teaching. They are well informed and appreciate the 'natural and relaxed atmosphere that encourages children to enjoy learning'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum provides well for the needs and circumstances of the pupils. For example, a river is close to the school and so weekly swimming lessons help to ensure pupils' safety. Links with a local network of schools help to provide additional enrichment such as French lessons. Reorganisation of the curriculum to provide more learning in themes instead of separate subject lessons is beginning to develop well. Not all staff, however, are fully confident in how to link basic skills, particularly literacy, into this thematic approach. Attention to pupils' learning about the diversity of cultures and customs in different parts of the world is developing effectively. A topic on Africa has helped pupils to understand that not all African countries are poor. Opportunities to develop enterprise capability are present in all classes through role play. Visits to historical sites and the theatre link to the work the pupils are doing in school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' care, guidance and support are outstanding. All pupils are treated as individuals and their needs are met accordingly. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported by external agencies as required. They are fully included in lessons and have detailed individual education plans to support their learning. Arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements. Pupils' safety in and out of school is excellent because of the diligence in completing risk assessments and health and safety checks. Assessment arrangements are outstanding and provide a very detailed breakdown of pupils' progress throughout school. The analysis of the assessments gathered is excellent and used to very good effect to support targeted groups.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has created a strong team that shares her vision. They are working together well to improve the school. Parents appreciate the approachability of all staff and the usefulness of the information they receive. The governing

body plays a key role in supporting and challenging the headteacher. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection. The school promotes community cohesion well. A range of effective links are made with the local community through the parent/teacher association and the community events held in school, for example Christmas and summer fairs and coffee mornings for residents of the village. Children's understanding of the wider world is developing well because of the good curriculum and various fund-raising activities. Self-evaluation is an accurate reflection of the school's current position and priorities. The school has a good capacity to 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?	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 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?	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	1

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?	1

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**

8 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mickley First School, Northumberland, NE43 7BG

Thanks to all of you for making my visit to your school so enjoyable. It was a disappointment to me to miss you all on my second day in school because of the failure to the heating system. Thanks to the discussions held with you and the work I saw on my first day in school, I have judged that you go to a good school with some outstanding features. The reasons for this are listed below.

- You reach above average standards in the tests you take in Years 2 and 4.
- Teaching is good and helps you to learn well.
- You have many visits to help make your learning more exciting.
- There is a lot going on in your community and everyone works to make this enjoyable and to involve local residents.
- Everyone involved in running your school does a good job to make sure you are very well cared for and happy.

There are some things for your school to do to make it even better. These are to make sure the records for the youngest children in the Reception class are more manageable, that support staff have plenty of guidance to help them support the pupils they are working with and that you are encouraged to use your literacy skills in lots of different subjects.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector