

Kielder Community First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122233
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327666
Inspection date	10 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Nigel Cromey-Hawke

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)	9
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 Steve Webb
Headteacher	Mr Michael Broadbent
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Kielder Hexham Northumberland NE48 1HQ
Telephone number	01434 250257
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very small first school in a remote rural area. All pupils are of White British origin and there is none whose first language is not English. The proportion with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, autism and speech and language delay is well above the national average. Pupils begin their schooling in Reception. Standards vary considerably between year groups because of the very small numbers overall. Pupils work in mixed age classes for literacy and numeracy depending upon their ability.

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. It has some outstanding features. Parents are universal in their support for it. One typically commented that it is 'a really friendly school which offers a first class education.'

Achievement throughout the school is good. Children enter the school with skills and knowledge generally below what is typical for their age. They make good progress through Reception and, in national tests at the end of Key Stage 1, they reach broadly average levels. Pupils leave the school at Year 4 with standards that meet the expectations for their age, although higher grades are not gained in English or mathematics. Standards in reading are good.

Pupils' personal development, together with their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Relationships are strong and, consequently, attitudes to learning and behaviour are excellent. Attendance is outstanding. Pupils develop good social skills within the small school community. They say they feel safe, valued and that they enjoy their learning. They have a very good understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle and participate enthusiastically in sporting events and the daily 'Activate' exercise sessions. Community cohesion is good, with especially close links with the local community and pupils demonstrate a good awareness of other faiths, cultures and races. The good curriculum helps them develop essential life skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). It also promotes their personal development through its environmental awareness programme.

Teaching is good and pupils benefit from the very small mixed age classes that reflect their abilities in different subjects. Activities in lessons are often of a practical nature, which help pupils see the relevance of their learning. Pupils are encouraged to explain their learning to others, which boosts their confidence. Pupils with learning difficulties make good, and sometimes very good, progress because of the excellent support they receive. The more able are not always stretched sufficiently to reach the higher grades. Pastoral care is excellent and the school works well with outside agencies to help promote pupils' personal development. All child protection and safeguarding requirements are in place. Pupils have highly personalised targets for English and mathematics and the school's good tracking and assessment systems show clearly what level they are working at. Parents especially value the good information on this that the school sends home.

Leadership and management of the school are good. Although carrying out a full teaching timetable, the headteacher has created a stimulating and supportive learning environment for pupils, helped by the talented and highly committed staff. The school knows what it has to do to improve further through its good self-evaluation, although governors' understanding of this is, as yet, underdeveloped. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection and its capacity to improve further is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enter with knowledge, understanding and skills that vary from year to year but are generally below those typical of their age, especially in personal and social development. They work alongside pupils in Key Stage 1. They make good progress towards the early learning goals and start Year 1 with levels of attainment that are

average. They are kept safe and secure. Their needs are well met because of the challenges within planned work and the freedom to initiate and choose where they want to learn.

The promotion of children's welfare is outstanding because of the levels of care they receive. As a result, their personal development and well-being are also outstanding. Children enjoy the range of activities on offer and are encouraged to explore things for themselves and be creative and imaginative in their learning. For example, the children enjoyed listening to a story about a balloon and then used their imagination to capture the adventures they might have had if they were transported far away by it. Children also enjoy using the outdoor environment.

The systems in place to track children's progress and share this information with parents are good and appreciated by them. Children are encouraged to work independently as well as learning to collaborate with each other when playing games inside and outside. Access to the outdoor learning area is somewhat restricted and children cannot move freely between here and the main classroom. A team of three teachers lead learning and development well, making sure there is a good level of continuity from day to day.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide greater challenge to more able pupils so that they achieve the higher levels in English and mathematics.
- Develop governors' understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school so that they can support and challenge it more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and achievement, by the end of Year 4, is good. This is because of the good teaching and curriculum and the individual support pupils receive in the very small classes. From starting points that are generally below those that are typical on entry to the school, good progress is made. Standards in national testing vary enormously as they relate to often only one or two pupils but they have been broadly average at Key Stage 1 for the previous three years. Pupils reach expected standards for their age by the time they leave, but higher levels are not reached in English and mathematics. Standards in reading are good. Pupils with learning difficulties make consistently good, and sometimes very good, progress as a result of the well focused support they receive in both key stages. As a result, they frequently meet national expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils say that school is an enjoyable place to be and that they feel safe and very well cared for. They express their views with confidence, learn to listen very well to each other and respect the views and feelings of others. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils get on very well together; bullying is very rare and dealt with well. Assemblies, visits and visitors to the school enrich pupils' experiences and promote excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' involvement in the local community is good, with fundraising and strong links with local businesses. Pupils have a very good understanding of environmental issues as a result of the extensive use of the local area within lessons. Pupils talk confidently and with real enthusiasm about the school and older pupils take great care and pride in looking after younger ones. Their understanding of the importance of healthy eating and lifestyles is excellent, helped by the

healthy cooked lunches that all pupils take every day, together with all staff, where such issues are regularly discussed. Pupils participate with enthusiasm in a good range of physical activities, often as part of the school's partnership with local schools. They are well prepared for their next stage of education, leaving with high levels of self-confidence and good skills in ICT. Attendance is outstanding in all years of the school; attitudes to learning are excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The very small class sizes enable teachers to place pupils in groups depending upon their progress in different subjects. This means that classes often contain three different year groups. The accurate matching of activities to pupils' needs is essential and the school generally does this well, although the more able are not always sufficiently challenged to reach the higher grades. Those who find learning difficult are very well supported. The varied activities in lessons have a strong practical basis and pupils are encouraged to explain their learning to others in the class. This boosts their confidence and contributes to their very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers use probing questions well to encourage pupils to think before answering and, as a result, pupils' speaking and listening skills are good. Marking is helpful, with many comments and regular assessments that identify what level pupils are working at.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad, balanced and is constantly being adapted to meet the widely differing needs of pupils in each year group. There is a strong emphasis upon key skills of literacy and numeracy and the organisation of different year groups for this works well. The school houses the village library and pupils' reading is especially well developed, helped by the almost daily contact with parents through their reading journals. The school undertakes practical projects that use the local environment well and these help to develop pupils' problem solving and design skills. Art and design are strengths of the school and it is currently reviewing how it builds creativity into all subjects across the curriculum. There is a good range of visits and visitors to the school and the use of ICT has been extended since the previous inspection to help develop important life skills. Awareness of ethnic diversity is being promoted through units of work such as the 'swallows' project.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The caring ethos of the school promotes enjoyment and achievement, and ensures that each pupil feels highly valued. 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 excellent and there is very good communication about this between the school and home. Each pupil has highly individualised targets and knows what they have to do to improve their work, although expectations for the more able are not always high enough. Effective links with outside agencies ensure high quality support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties. Teaching assistants are used very effectively in supporting learning and close links with the nearby middle school ensure that transition is trouble free.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a full teaching timetable and combines this with good leadership and management of the school. Communication between the small number of staff is good and job-sharers effectively brief each other to achieve continuity of teaching and learning. Staff are highly committed, hard working and have built a warm, caring and stimulating learning environment for the pupils that is highly valued within the village community. Self-evaluation is good, with the headteacher able to carry out informal monitoring on an almost daily basis. His teaching and leadership are reviewed regularly by the local authority. Staff know what the school needs to do to improve further as a result of frequent meetings and there are appropriate, if rather generalised, plans in place to achieve this. Significant changes in the governing body mean that their understanding is, as yet, underdeveloped. The school works well with partners, especially the Forestry Commission, to promote the personal development and well-being of pupils. Community cohesion is good, especially at the local level, and a good understanding of the lives of different people is being promoted through curriculum projects.

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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?	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	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?	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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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	3
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**

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11 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kielder Community First School, Northumberland, NE48 1HQ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave my colleague and me when we inspected your school. You were very friendly, polite and enthusiastic about what you do. You told us a lot of interesting things about your school and you are clearly very proud of it. Kielder Community First School is a good school with some outstanding features. These are some of the things we found that are strengths of your school.

- You get a good start to your education in your Reception year.
- You have very positive attitudes to learning, your behaviour is excellent and you work very well together. Your attendance is outstanding. Well done.
- The teaching and range of subjects provided by the school are good and contribute to your enjoyment of learning.
- The levels of care you receive in the school are outstanding.
- The school is well led and managed.

These are some of the things we have suggested to your school to make it an even better place to learn.

- Provide more challenge to those of you who find learning easier so that you reach higher standards in English and mathematics.
- Enable the governors to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school better so that they can help it improve further.

You can help by telling your teachers how you learn best and if you have any problems. You can also help by continuing to behave as well as you do and working hard as you do at the moment.

Yours faithfully

Nigel Cromey-Hawke

Lead inspector