

Mowbray First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122243
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327669
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Gordon Potter

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)	208
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 Alan Moody
Headteacher	Mrs Joan Riley
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Stakeford Lane Guide Post Choppington Northumberland NE62 5HQ
Telephone number	01670 823198
Fax number	01670 531329

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size school serves an area of significant social deprivation. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for a free school meal is above average. A below average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities and an average proportion has a statement of special educational need. The school has Healthy School Award, Activemark, the International School Award and Silver Artsmark. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage's Nursery class at the start of the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which is justly proud of its place at the heart of the local community. Pupils achieve outstanding personal development and above average standards because of the high quality teaching and care they receive and because they thrive on the outstanding learning activities they experience. The school is extremely well managed, with outstanding leadership by the headteacher and her senior team who motivate all staff and children to have high expectations and to strive for even further improvement. There are very strong relationships with parents who appreciate how the school listens to and responds to their concerns. As they say, 'We could not have wished for a more dedicated team of professionals to educate our children. It is through their constant hard work that children remain motivated and enthusiastic in school.'

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers engage pupils in an exciting range of interesting independent and group work activities and they make it very clear to pupils what they are expected to learn. In the very few lessons which do not reach the highest standard, it is because pupils are not as involved as they might be because too much time is spent listening rather than doing. The curriculum is outstanding. It is based firmly on pupils' interests and the development of skills and helps them to achieve high standards. It is greatly enhanced by an excellent range of activities and visits to promote learning. These activities excite pupils and encourage them to explore new areas of experience. They have a clear understanding of other faiths and cultures and life in other countries. However, their understanding of the multi-ethnic make-up of modern Britain is less well developed.

Standards at the end of Year 4 have been broadly average in recent years. Evidence seen in school shows that current standards are above average and that recent initiatives have had a very positive impact on raising standards in writing and mathematics. This represents outstanding progress considering their well below average starting points on entry to the school. Inspection evidence shows that pupils currently in Year 2 are well placed to achieve above average standards in their assessments at the end of this school year. Pupils in all classes make extremely rapid progress. Their achievement is outstanding.

Excellent care and support from a caring staff promote pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. Academic guidance is outstanding. Detailed analysis of data and meticulous marking of pupils' work ensure that the setting of targets is effective in enabling pupils to make outstanding progress. Behaviour and attitudes are exemplary and pupils show remarkable self-confidence and concern for one another and for others less fortunate than themselves. Pupils enjoy school immensely and this is reflected in their good attendance. They readily take on responsibilities, such as membership of the school council. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of how to keep healthy and stay fit, as the school strongly promotes these qualities. Pupils develop highly effective life skills as they move through the school because of the varied high quality experiences they receive.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has established a leadership team which shares her clear vision and determination for school improvement. Well focused and appropriate initiatives have had an impact on further improving provision in school and in attaining above average academic standards. Teamwork is exceptional and the headteacher encourages all teachers and the team of teaching assistants to develop their leadership roles. The school has a very thorough and detailed understanding of its many strengths and meticulous

development planning enables any relative weaknesses to be addressed. This has ensured continued improvement for the school. It therefore offers outstanding value for money and has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The level at which children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage is well below what is typical for children of this age, particularly in aspects of communication, language and literacy, personal and social development, and mathematics. They make exceptional progress so that they move to Year 1 with skills which are broadly average. Teaching is of a high quality. Independence is promoted so that children know how to 'sign in', dress and undress for yoga sessions and choose activities both indoors and out. Staff listen to their views and are not afraid to adjust planning to take account of children's interests. Children learn about the world of work by decorating plant pots and selling plants. They take part in investigative activities like studying caterpillars with magnifying glasses in their garden. Care for children is excellent because staff with responsibility for each child's development meet children in their own homes and get to know them and their families well before they start. Accordingly, the school meets their needs effectively so that any child needing extra support is soon spotted and given extra help. Parents speak very highly of the care and learning their children receive. Assessment procedures are rigorous and diaries which celebrate each child's learning are an excellent way for parents to share children's progress. Children are taught to stay safe and healthy by visitors such as firemen, the school nurse and road safety officers; they have a clear awareness of their own safety when playing outdoors. The outstanding leadership and excellent teamwork provide a vibrant and exciting learning environment in which children are valued and in which their behaviour is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop pupils' understanding of the different faiths and cultures that make up modern Britain.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 dipped in 2007 but rose to broadly average last year. Current standards show this improvement has continued and this year and are now above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Many pupils have made at least good progress.

Pupils currently in Year 4 have achieved above average standards and have made excellent progress from their end of Key Stage 1 starting points, which were lower than is usual for the school. This is as a result of initiatives by the school to raise achievement in writing and mathematics. There is also substantial evidence of pupils' excellent achievement in the humanities, sport and arts. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar outstanding progress to their peers as a result of extremely effective intervention to meet their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are extremely positive about their school, enjoy learning and grow quickly in confidence and self-esteem. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They have a clear understanding of other faiths and cultures and life in other countries. However, their understanding of the multi-ethnic make-up of modern Britain is less well developed. Behaviour throughout the school is excellent, both in classrooms and around the corridors and playgrounds. Pupils know how to keep safe. They play together very harmoniously and are polite and supportive of each other. They understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle exceptionally well. Attendance is above average and reflects pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school. The school council is proactive and has been responsible for improving the gardens and school meals and for raising money for charity. Pupils are strongly involved in the wider community with contributions to local festivals and public performances and through work with a special school. Their enterprise skills are extremely well developed through a strongly focused programme linked to local businesses. These, and the many other skills they acquire, including exceptional skills in information and communication technology (ICT), and their excellent achievement, mean that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Lessons are exceptionally well planned so that work is challenging and matches the needs of all pupils. There is a range of stimulating activities which help pupils to learn enthusiastically together and which develop their speaking and listening skills. Teachers explain very clearly and model learning well, making good use of interactive whiteboard technology. Therefore, pupils are clear about what they are to learn and how they can succeed in their work. Pupils enjoy these sessions which are led by their teachers but, occasionally, teachers explain too much and time for pupils to learn for themselves is missed. Teachers use questions extremely well to ascertain what pupils already know and to encourage them to think and to develop their ideas. They check regularly throughout the lesson that progress is being made. Pupils' excellent behaviour contributes to their enjoyment of learning and helps them to make rapid progress. Teaching assistants are extremely well used to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Allied to excellently planned provision, this helps these pupils make outstanding progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is strongly focused on activities which excite pupils and on which they thrive. There is a strong focus on the development of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT and a particularly successful focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. The planning of the curriculum ensures that these skills are taught through a wide range of activities and experiences which allow pupils to see the links between subjects. The recent introduction of strategies to improve writing has had a major and immediate impact on raising standards because pupils are encouraged to write regularly in subjects other than English. The many visits that the pupils make to museums, the beach and gardens are the focus for many adventures in discovery and pupils develop a great love of learning which supports their excellent personal

development. Particularly impressive is the focus on enterprise activities which give them a clear understanding of the world of work. Superb international links with a school in Africa significantly enhance pupils' understanding of their own lives and that of others in different cultures, contributing very well to the promotion of community cohesion. In addition, there are opportunities for pupils to enjoy music and art and participate in sports, both in lessons and in the extensive range of after-school clubs which many pupils enjoy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school is proud of its inclusive nature and pupils benefit from the excellent quality of care and guidance by all staff. The school has had great success in helping parents to assist their children in learning by advising them how to support pupils with activities at home. Pupils' safety is given the highest priority and all procedures related to maintaining pupils' safeguarding and child protection meet current requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent support and achieve very well. Overall, provision is well planned, progress is carefully monitored and the skilled team of support staff is appropriately deployed. Excellent arrangements are in place to enable all pupils to make a seamless transition into school and to the next phase of their education. Marking of pupils' work and the assessment of academic progress are rigorous and are used to set targets for pupils or to plan interventions to deal with underachievement. Pupils develop an outstanding understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses and have clear individual targets for improvement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The highly respected headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and excellent leadership has ensured that this has resulted in a high quality environment in which staff and pupils thrive. She is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher so that the school uses data extremely effectively to identify areas for development, to ensure that planning and teaching are focused on raising standards and to monitor progress. Accordingly, challenging targets have been set for staff and children and these have contributed to outstanding rates of progress. Leaders at all levels are involved in school self-evaluation and planning for improvement and they relish the responsibility and accountability. Governance is outstanding. The governing body offers excellent support and challenge which has resulted in continuing school improvement. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good; it is very well planned and monitored and has had a very positive influence on the school's curriculum. Equality is strongly promoted. Parents unanimously support the work of the school and the way it cares for their children and helps them to flourish.

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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?	1
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	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	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	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

2 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mowbray First School, Northumberland, NE62 5HQ

On behalf of the team, thank you so much for making us welcome when we inspected your school. Mowbray First School is an outstanding school. The staff care for you extremely well. They help you to enjoy your learning because they make your lessons fun and very effective and they arrange many exciting activities for you to do. They encourage you to know what you need to learn in each lesson.

We were pleased to see that you work very hard and do your best. You care for one another in the playground. We think that you behave extremely well and you look after one another and others less fortunate than yourselves admirably. You are very polite and helpful and we enjoyed talking to you about your school. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you enjoy your lessons and that you like your teachers. You said you appreciated the activities the school provides for you, such as visits and gardening. We understand why you feel this way. Your parents and carers like the school very much, especially the way in which your teachers care for you and help you to enjoy your learning.

The way your school is led and managed is excellent. Leaders and staff know the school well and their work is making the school become increasingly effective for you. We have asked your teachers to do one thing to make your school even better. That is to help you to understand that in other parts of Britain there are many people who come from different faiths and cultures.

You can help by continuing to do your very best – as I am sure you will.

Yours faithfully

Gordon Potter

Lead inspector