

Morpeth Stobhillgate First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122246
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327670
Inspection dates	20–21 May 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)	179
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 Adrienne Stoner
Headteacher	Mr Neil Richmond
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Stobhillgate Morpeth Northumberland NE61 2HA
Telephone number	01670 513382
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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 below average sized school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. None are at an early stage of acquiring English. The percentage eligible for free school meals is below average, so too is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is a part-time Nursery and a Reception class.

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. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and outstanding direction. The school very successfully meets its declared aim to 'promote and value the worth and attainment of all' because pupils make excellent progress both academically and personally. 'I am amazed at how much my child learns and has fun at the same time' is a comment that typifies most parents' positive view of the school.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, is outstanding. In assemblies, pupils reflect on their place in school learning 'Golden Rules' such as 'we are gentle, we don't hurt others'. Pupils show delight in the activities that make up the outstanding curriculum. Pupils have collaborated in an excellent partnership with those in Years 5 and 6 from a nearby special school to designate a 'walk to school' zone. Their enthusiasm for daily exercise including 'Wake and Shake' has helped secure the Healthy School award. School councillors play a major role in identifying ways to make the school a better place. An area for development is that there are missed opportunities for councillors to use their excellent progress in basic skills, for example, in taking minutes or leading meetings. The very large majority of pupils attend well. The school is doing all it can by working with families and other professionals to improve the attendance of a very small minority of pupils who do not attend as regularly and who bring the overall rate down to satisfactory.

Pupils' achievement is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. From Year 1 to Year 4, achievement is outstanding. Pupils enter Year 1 with broadly average standards. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average. By Year 4 standards are well above expectations for the pupils' age in English and above expectations in mathematics and science. Pupils from Years 1 to 4, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress. Standards in creative work are high and have helped the school secure Artsmark Gold.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teaching takes advantage of pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour by challenging them to do their best. Practice is at least consistently good and there are some outstanding lessons in both key stages. An excellent whole-school teaching strategy for improving story writing contributes significantly to the high standards in this key skill. It is typical of pupils' excellent preparation for the future.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff care passionately about each pupil; this is indeed a school in which every child clearly matters. Excellent use is made of intervention programmes. Very clear spoken guidance in lessons and encouraging comments in marking leaves pupils in no doubt about what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management, including governance are outstanding. A very enthusiastic staff support the headteacher and teamwork is exceptional. Community cohesion is promoted well. The school uses self-evaluation systematically to inform its future planning. The drive for raising achievement typifies the excellent improvement since the previous inspection. Leadership has an excellent capacity for further improvement. The school provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good. Children's personal development and their welfare are outstanding. Children's abilities vary widely when they start Nursery but overall are slightly below the level expected

for their age. Children quickly settle and feel very safe and secure. They know they can trust the adults who will help them personally. They behave very well, responding to instructions and quickly learning to follow the daily routines.

Learning and development are good because teaching is good. Effective teamwork by adults results in the good planning of exciting activities that match children's needs. The attractive indoor environment supports learning well. The balance between activities that children choose and those that adults lead is generally appropriate and provides sufficient opportunities to develop children's independence. Children love, for example, activities such as learning to count to six, exploring the feel of jelly and decorating ladybird biscuits. Progress is good across all the areas of learning and children enter Year 1 with broadly average standards.

The excellent care is founded on adults' detailed understanding of each child's needs and the fine tuning of personal support. Staff confidently observe and record children's development. Partnership with parents is good. Parents have formal and informal opportunities to find out how well their child is progressing.

Leadership is good. The new leadership has quickly implemented significant improvements on the journey towards ensuring that the new framework for under- fives is implemented. Early impact is evident in the action taken to develop the outdoor provision by providing more opportunities for role-play and mark making.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for school councillors to use their excellent progress in basic skills to record pupils' views and plan improvements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and all pupils achieve equally well. Pupils enter Year 1 with broadly average standards. Pupils make excellent progress from Year 1 to Year 4. Current standards in Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Current standards in Year 4 are above what is typically expected in mathematics and science and well above expectations in reading and writing. More able pupils are challenged very well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress as they benefit from excellent support sensitively provided by skilled assistants.

The results of the 2008 Year 2 assessments were overall above average. This was another year of strong results that have produced a consistently strong picture by the end of Years 2 and 4. It demonstrates exceptional achievement. It reflects the school leaders' resolute drive to raise standards, coaching staff in high quality teaching methods and provision of a rich and varied curriculum that stimulates pupils to learn.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are very reflective, thinking deeply about the plight of local families affected by recent flooding of the town centre. They are very knowledgeable about traditions of other faiths and cultures. Pupils value highly staying fit and eating healthily. They feel very safe knowing they can promptly access help from very supportive adults or a friendly 'Rainbow' buddy during

playtimes. Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They are very proud of their school and their behaviour is excellent.

Pupils love coming to this school and the very large majority of them attend well. They speak positively about lessons being fun yet challenging. They are thrilled to take part in residential visits that include new challenging outdoor experiences. Pupils have earned the school an excellent reputation locally through their contribution to community projects such as 'Morpeth in Bloom', charitable fundraising and church services. Pupils have a strong voice in the school. Councillors are proud of their success in securing new facilities such as the popular climbing wall. Although an adult draws their ideas together into an innovative action plan, the school provides too few opportunities for councillors to make better use of their excellent progress in literacy and numeracy skills to record pupils' views and plan improvements. Given the excellent progress made in basic skills, the involvement in enterprise projects and a first-rate partnership with pupils from the nearby special school; pupils are preparing themselves very well to cope with life ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teaching approaches are founded on principles of how children learn and outstanding practice features in both key stages. Consequently, pupils make consistently speedy gains. Very imaginative, engaging teaching is at the heart of methods that hold pupils' interest. Skilful planning ensures pupils of all abilities are challenged exceptionally well in relation to their starting points. Assessment practices have been considerably strengthened. A strength is the consistent whole-school approach to marking that is encouraging pupils to be more aware of their own progress.

Teaching demands much from pupils. Expectations are high and the pace is often brisk. In a lively Year 2 numeracy lesson, pupils were expected to find at least three alternative solutions to a calculation. In Year 3, pupils tackled a demanding alphabetical-order task to sharpen up research skills for a mini-beast topic. Teaching of this quality keeps pupils on their toes and contributes significantly to their outstanding progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and learning is fun. Pupils thrive on lively, exciting learning experiences. Science and mathematics progress is swift because pupils have many opportunities to apply their skills to carrying out investigations. New facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) add significantly to learning. A particular strength is the well organised topics that link learning very effectively between one subject and another. Displays confirm innovative, creative and technological approaches are applied. In history, pupils used art skills to design medieval purses. Others learned about the concept of pneumatics as they added movement to their models of armoured soldiers.

Visitors and visits enhance the learning considerably. Outdoor learning has a high profile. Popular activities such as tending the vegetable plot or orienteering around the school site provide pupils with useful practical skills. Extra-curricular provision is strong with a very good uptake of activities that include sport, dance, music and art.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. A particular strength is that staff know pupils and their families exceptionally well. They promote highly inclusive practices. Procedures for safeguarding, child protection and risk assessments are rigorously applied and meet requirements.

Support for pupils is excellent and enhanced through very good partnerships with outside professionals. The school, in partnership with a parent support worker and welfare officer, is doing as much as it can to improve the attendance of a very small minority of pupils whose attendance is well below that expected. The school has conducted a rigorous analysis of individual attendance to target action most appropriately. Parents acknowledge support is matched very well to the full ability range and helps pupils make outstanding progress. One parent wrote, 'My child is very bright, they keep him challenged and push him'. Another described how senior management 'piles enthusiasm and self-confidence into pupils'. Pupils are guided very clearly towards meeting challenging targets. They benefit from clear verbal guidance in lessons. Excellent marking builds on this in the personal dialogue found in their exercise books.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and is the driving force behind the success of this school. Senior leaders and staff, functioning exceptionally well as a team, support him very well. In this highly inclusive school, the leadership is an outstanding success in promoting high standards and pupils' exceptional personal qualities.

Leaders are ambitious. They set challenging targets for pupil performance and whole-school developments. The governors have made good progress in developing their challenge and support role which enables them to make a substantial contribution to the many good monitoring practices that lead to well informed self-evaluation. Leaders promote community cohesion well. They have evaluated the school setting and successfully identified opportunities to promote diversity by strengthening pupils' understanding of their place in the school, local and wider communities. It is typically illustrated by pupils' contribution to flower displays in the town centre and support for an African Village.

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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?	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?	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	3
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**

22 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Morpeth Stobhillgate First School, Northumberland,
NE61 2HA

We inspect many schools and yours is one of the best we have visited. You attend an outstanding school. Thank you for helping us. We enjoyed meeting you, visiting your classrooms, looking at your work and talking to you about your school. You were friendly and polite. We were impressed by your excellent behaviour. Although most of you attend well your overall attendance is satisfactory.

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 value being fit, taking part in 'Wake and Shake' and staying healthy. You feel very safe and know how to quickly access help. You love school activities that make up the outstanding curriculum and out-of-school clubs. Your councillors ensure you have a real voice in school and have helped to improve it. The school does not yet enable them to make the best use of their strong progress in key skills to carry out these duties. You receive excellent care, support and guidance.

Your school leaders have devised an exciting teaching and learning programme for you and it stimulates you to do your best. You are set challenging targets because the staff know you can achieve very well and make rapid progress. You play your part by continuing to work hard in lessons. Consequently, you all make outstanding progress throughout the school. By the end of Year 2 you are above average and by Year 4 your standards are even higher. Well done!

There is one thing the school could do better.

- Ensure school councillors are given opportunities to use the excellent progress they make in key skills to enhance their role.

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

Yours faithfully

Derek Sleightholme and Wendy Richardson

Inspectors