

Malvin's Close First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122262
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327674
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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)	350
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 Lynn Camsell
Headteacher	Ms Julie Bowman
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Albion Way Blyth Northumberland NE24 5BL
Telephone number	01670 354082
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Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a larger than average size First School which serves an area of above average social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils who claim a free school meal is above average. A smaller proportion of pupils than in other schools nationally experience learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are from predominantly White British backgrounds and none requires support for learning English as an additional language. The school has designated status as a training school and through the provision of a virtual classroom provides initial teacher training in collaboration with local universities. The headteacher is currently acting as an executive headteacher to another First School within the local area. The school is part of the Northumberland Local Authority reorganisation plans and will become a primary school from September 2009. A new building is currently under construction on the existing site, limiting the space available for use by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

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 many strengths. An exceptionally varied curriculum inspires pupils to work hard and gain a very wide range of skills. The headteacher is a strong leader who, ably supported by a senior leadership team, successfully delivers the school aim to provide extensive opportunities for pupils of all abilities to develop high aspirations for the future. This is achieved through excellent partnerships with other schools, universities and a wide range of other agencies. The school makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion. In particular, it has nurtured productive links with other schools locally, nationally and internationally which builds pupils' understanding of social diversity as well as developing their awareness of other faiths and cultures.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their attendance is above average and they come to school ready to learn and are eager to contribute to lessons. Their exemplary behaviour means that lessons are rarely disrupted and can be conducted at a good pace and in a positive climate. Pupils have a very responsible attitude to their own safety and their development of a healthy lifestyle is excellent. This is due to the outstanding curriculum for personal, health and social education. Staff have created a very inclusive school in which all pupils get on well together regardless of ability, gender or ethnicity. All groups of pupils consistently make valuable contributions to life in school and the wider community. The pupils' high levels of self-esteem and positive attitudes prepare them extremely well for the next stage in their learning and for future adult life.

Excellent relationships and exemplary care, guidance and support result in happy learners who overcome any difficulties quickly to reach significantly higher than average standards by the end of Key Stage 1. Good systems of leadership and management enable the school to identify the need to improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2. Effective action has ensured that teaching throughout the school is now consistently good. However, some weaknesses remain in teachers' ability to accurately assess pupils' work. This, together with insufficient account being taken of the high standards reached at the end of Year 2, when setting targets for the end of Year 4, is the main reason why pupils' overall achievement is good and not outstanding. Nevertheless, standards at the end of Year 4 are above those expected for this age and are higher than at the time of the last inspection. This, together with the school's success in addressing the issues raised at the last inspection, demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is good with outstanding features. Children enter the Nursery with skills which are below those typical for their age. They get off to a good start due to good provision for their learning and development and achieve well in a happy, safe and attractive learning environment. By the end of the EYFS, most children have made good progress to attain skills at the levels expected of children their age and many are attaining at higher levels. Highly effective systems for children's welfare begin with phased entry into school; they quickly gain in confidence and settle well into new surroundings. The recent introduction of a named adult (key person) for each child in the Nursery means that staff get to know their group of children well and are able to cater effectively for their individual personal and learning needs. Children's attitudes to learning and their early literacy and numeracy skills

are promoted well. The introduction of a structured programme in teaching letters and sounds has a positive impact on improving early reading skills. Planning is generally focused around topics, covers all areas of learning and is well detailed for adult-led activity. During these activities, adults explain clearly, question well and praise children for their efforts. They interact sensitively and take learning forward during child-chosen activity. Planning for activities from which children can choose is, however, less evident in Reception classes; therefore, children do not always have enough opportunities to become independent learners. Staff observe children's development carefully, record what they see and use the information well to plan the next learning steps. The school is doing all it can to provide outdoor learning despite temporary restrictions due to building works. Leadership in the EYFS is good. Staff work well together as a team and are currently looking forward to continuing the good provision when they move into the new building.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the accuracy and rigour of the assessments of pupils' work.
- Ensure that the targets set for the end of Year 4 take full account of the high standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. In Key Stage 1, pupils build well on the good start they make in the EYFS. In national assessments, including those in 2008, they regularly attain standards that are significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Although standards by the end of Year 4 are above those expected, pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4 is not always fast enough. Pupils leaving Year 4 in 2008 made less than expected progress when taking into account the high standards which they reached when aged seven. This was particularly evident in mathematics. Inspection evidence and school records show that pupils currently in Key Stage 2 are now making better progress as a result of consistently good teaching and standards are rising. The school provides good support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they too achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils exhibit outstanding personal development and well-being. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and is fully reflected in their work, in their confidence and in their commitment to school life. The 'Prayer Tree' shows good examples of pupils' reflective thoughts when they promise to help their friends out in school or to tidy their own bedrooms at home. Pupils are extremely well behaved, courteous and well mannered. Their successes are valued by the school and their photographs and achievements are displayed for all to see. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance. They enjoy learning and making good friendships. Pupils have a strong commitment to living a healthy lifestyle and discuss activities, including swimming and bike riding with enthusiasm. They have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe and how important rules are in this process. Pupils offer an exemplary commitment to the school community, acting as school and class monitors. They especially enjoy helping the youngest children during playtimes. Pupils are rightly proud of their academic and personal achievements. They have high aspirations and are

exceptionally well prepared for the future with many aiming to become professional members of society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good with many strengths. Lessons are lively and fun; they move along at a brisk pace with a wide range of teaching and learning methods. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are excellent; as a result, behaviour management is highly effective and pupils always try their best. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to support pupils who need extra help, and this helps such pupils to take a full part in lessons. Improvements in the quality of teaching in Years 3 and 4, which is now consistently good and often outstanding, has improved the rate of pupils' progress. Teachers are very good at involving pupils in the assessment of their own work and marking sets clear targets for their next steps in learning. However, the effectiveness of this is negated when teachers' assessment of pupils' work lacks accuracy and rigour. Occasionally, work is assessed as being above average for the pupils' age without taking sufficient account of the aspects requiring more attention. As a result, when these assessments are used as a basis for future work, pupils move on to develop new skills before they have consolidated prior learning. This leads to errors in some basic skills continuing to occur as pupils move through the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school rightly prides itself on providing an exciting range of experiences that inspire and motivate pupils. Careful attention is given to ensuring all have full access to everything that is happening. Creativity is fostered very imaginatively. For example, on the days prior to the inspection, pupils relished the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in singing, dancing and drama within a whole-school performance. Experiences such as these contribute strongly to pupils' learning and their enjoyment of school. Outstanding use is made of educational visits and visitors to provide first-hand experiences from which pupils see the relevance of their learning to life. Improvements since the last inspection have ensured that pupils have good opportunities to practise their writing skills across a variety of subjects. The school provides pupils with a wide variety of physical activities as part of the school day. These, together with carefully tailored activities which take into account the emotional needs of each individual make a valuable contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are exemplary. Procedures to safeguard pupils meet current government guidelines. Effective transition arrangements ensure pupils settle well in new surroundings. The quality of pastoral care is outstanding because the school is totally committed to working with parents and a range of agencies to ensure pupils' needs are met. The service provided by the Place2be and Place2talk initiatives offers very good support for pupils' emotional needs and this helps improve their learning. Systems to provide pupils with ongoing academic guidance are exceptionally good. Pupils are praised for their achievements and are set targets for their next steps in learning. Pupils are knowledgeable about their targets and know exactly

what they have to do to improve their work. Although in the main this contributes significantly to the good rates of progress, at times teachers confirm that pupils have met their targets without evidence in their work that their knowledge and skills are secure.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The drive, commitment and enthusiasm of the headteacher and senior staff have helped the school to maintain high standards at the end of Key Stage 1. Self-evaluation is good and the school's track record shows its success in identifying weaknesses and introducing measures to rectify them. For example, monitoring of lessons highlighted the need to improve the quality of teaching within Key Stage 2. Subsequent changes have been successful as shown by the improved quality of teaching and learning in this key stage. As a result, pupils' progress has improved and is now good. However, procedures to set targets for pupils in Year 4 do not take sufficient account of the high levels reached by pupils at the end of Year 2. This means that targets are not always challenging enough and is one of the key reasons why achievement remains good rather than outstanding. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school but they do not yet have all the information needed on pupils' progress to be able to hold the school to account.

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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?	1
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?	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?	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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

8 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Malvin's Close First School, Northumberland, NE24 5BL

On behalf of the team, thank you so much for making us welcome when we inspected your school. Malvin's Close is a good school. The staff care for you exceptionally well and you respond by behaving extremely well and trying hard to do your best. We were most impressed by the sensible way in which you make friends with others and look after each other. You help to make others feel safe in school.

The school makes sure you enjoy learning by providing you with an outstanding range of activities which help you to make good progress. You do especially well from the time you come to Nursery, until you are seven, when the standards that you reach are much higher than those of pupils in lots of other schools. We have asked the school to make sure the targets they set for you at the end of Year 4 help you to reach higher standards by the time you leave the school.

It was good to see how many of you know what you need to do to improve your work. To make sure that you can put into practice everything you have already learned before you begin work towards your next target, we have asked your teachers to check your work very carefully. You can help with this by checking your own work and looking for ways that you can improve it.

We wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Linda Buller

Lead inspector