

Embleton Vincent Edwards Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122290
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327688
Inspection date	3 July 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	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	22
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 Margaret Brooks
Headteacher	Miss Julie Harris
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Embleton Alnwick Northumberland NE66 3XR
Telephone number	01665 576612

Age group	4–9
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Age group 4-9

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very small rural school in a coastal setting. All pupils are White British. The percentage eligible for free school meals is below average. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school was confederated with another first school. There have been many staff changes, including leadership and its present organisation dates from September 2008. The headteacher shares leadership between this and the local middle school. Consequently, day-to-day management is devolved for most of the time to an assistant headteacher.

Most children are admitted having first attended an on-site privately run Nursery that was inspected separately by Ofsted. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision covers Reception children taught in a class with Year 1 and at times Year 2 pupils.

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. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. 'The atmosphere is wonderful and the children are very well cared for' is a written comment that sums up parents' unanimous support for the school. The new leadership is successfully building on the trend of improvement in standards. They have added enrichment to the curriculum and have secured high levels of parental satisfaction.

Achievement is good. All pupils achieve equally well. Pupil numbers vary from year-to-year currently ranging from one to seven pupils. Standards therefore often vary considerably and caution needs to be exercised when making comparisons with national test results. Pupils start Year 1 with variable starting points although they are often slightly above average. Progress from these different beginnings is good and even across subjects. The typical pattern is that standards are above average by the end of Year 2 and above the level expected by the end of Year 4. Given pupils' good progress in basic skills they are well prepared for the future.

Pupils are very reflective, lighting candles to set a positive tone for collective worship. They value being healthy and make great efforts to stay fit knowing a balanced diet and regular exercise make a real difference. Pupils' efforts have helped the school gain the Activemark. They are settled and feel very safe because the pastoral care is very good. This leads to an ethos that is welcoming and supportive and pupils know an adult will help them personally should they be ever troubled. Their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils love school, the activities it provides, and the opportunities to work and play together. They have a real say in their school and in village life. The school councillors often act as a focus group representing the views of the school to others.

The good progress made by pupils owes much to the good teaching. Pupil groupings are small and the benefits show in the personal attention staff provide. Teachers successfully plan and organise activities to match individual starting points. This ensures that learning across subjects is effective. Teachers do not always pay enough attention to improving pupils' spelling and punctuation skills. The good curriculum, often enhanced by visiting specialists, engages pupils and supports good progress. Pupils say they like the practical activities, visits and the extra-curricular clubs provided. Parents value the support provided for pupils with specific needs. Academic guidance is good, especially that provided in lessons and through marking. Target setting is at a more advanced stage in literacy than other subjects.

Leadership, management and governance are good. There is clear direction and a steadfast focus on raising achievement and promoting outstanding personal development. Staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are aware that the development plan is too complex and does not always focus on the most important priorities. Governors support and challenge the school well especially through their well-focused visits. Community cohesion is promoted satisfactorily. A weakness, already recognised and being addressed by the school, is that pupils' understanding of the richness and diversity of modern Britain is insufficiently promoted. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good. Children's personal development is outstanding. Most children are admitted to the Reception Year with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. Some have lower

starting points in early literacy and numeracy skills. Children make a really good start to their life in school. Welfare is good. Adults know each child personally and fine tune care and support to meet individual needs. Consequently, children are very happy, safe and secure in their attractive classroom environment where they learn and play together happily. Children use the indoor and outdoor facilities safely. Their knowledge of possible hazards, acquired by making their own risk assessment, is an exemplary feature of their personal development. Children learn school routines quickly and take on responsibility for organising milk and fruit for the class very well indeed.

Learning is good because teaching is good. Phonics are taught well so gains in early literacy skills are good. A lively mix of activities ensures children acquire new knowledge by exploring and investigating. Although activities led by adults and those selected by the children are well planned, the preparation of independent activities occasionally lacks a clarity of purpose. Observations are made regularly to assess individual children's progress. The school data confirms that children of different levels of development make good progress. By the time they leave Reception most pupils have reached slightly above average levels of development. The progress in their initial weaker skills of literacy and numeracy is especially good.

Leadership is good. Much has been achieved in the relatively short time since the leader was appointed. Important outcomes are that the new framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage is being fully met. This year good progress has been made in extending outdoor learning opportunities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Simplify school development planning to focus on the most important priorities.
- Improve pupils' understanding of the richness and diversity of modern Britain.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and the overall picture is of above average standards. Pupils usually start in Year 1 slightly above average. They make good progress and standards by the end of Year 2 are usually above average. Standards are rising. Current standards in Year 2 are above average in writing and well above average in reading and mathematics. These pupils entered Year 1 above average and have achieved well. Pupils continue to make good progress in Key Stage 2 and by the end of Year 4 standards in English, mathematics and science are usually above the level expected at that age. Standards fluctuate considerably because of the small numbers in each cohort. Current standards in Year 4 are at the expected level. These pupils have made good progress from their below average starting points in Year 2. The national and optional assessments in 2008 involved three pupils in Year 2 and seven in Year 4. These pupils made good progress when compared with their individual starting points and reached better standards than those expected for their age. The good progress can be traced to good teaching, a lively curriculum and much personal support and attention.

More able pupils benefit from higher challenge. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are sensitively supported and guided by skilled teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils have a very good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. One assessed the value of the daily exercise session by remarking, 'It wakes you up and keeps your brain alert!' They feel very safe because they can access the help of a friendly Year 4 'blue cap' buddy in the playground or approach an adult whom they fully trust. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and they especially enjoy the many visits, clubs and residential weekends. Attendance is above average and behaviour is hard to fault. Pupils make an excellent contribution to school life. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils use assemblies to think about others such as how they might cheer someone up. The 'Owl Tree' corridor display is an excellent facility used by pupils to express their personal thoughts about life at school. Pupils have a clear voice in school improvements. Councillors ensured that the pupils' wish for more clubs came to fruition. Pupils' excellent service to the village community includes their ideas incorporated within the parish plan, fundraising improvement to a local park and contributions to the community magazine. Pupils' strong social development alongside their secure basic skills prepares them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Confident teaching and engaging methods hold pupils' interest and help to acquire basic skills. Pupils' enthusiastic response to the sight of dye moving up a stick of celery typifies the way teaching makes learning fun through well organised practical activities. Learning is enhanced when teaching skilfully blends skills in one subject with another. For example, effective combined teaching of science and mathematics helped pupils to apply their understanding of metric measures to control the water supply to plants in a germination experiment.

Dialogue with pupils is positive and this encourages strong relationships. Another strength of teaching is the excellent attention given, at the planning stage, to preparing activities that are regularly personalised to match pupils' individual needs. The drive to improve English is being addressed confidently with initiatives to promote imaginative writing incorporating stimulating vocabulary. Although teaching is successfully helping pupils to make writing a more pleasurable experience it is not always sufficiently demanding in ensuring accuracy in spelling and correct use of punctuation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are taught well as separate subjects and increasingly through other subjects within the curriculum. As a result, pupils develop a greater interest in their work especially their writing. However, there is not always enough focus on improving spelling and punctuation. Although ICT is used well to develop writing and research skills, leaders recognise in their school audit that a wider range of ICT skills could be used to enhance learning in other subjects. Displays illustrate the richness of experiences. For example, in science, planets suspended from a classroom ceiling typify the enticing way the curriculum is used to stimulate learning.

The curriculum promotes pupils' progress well. School leaders understand how different pupils learn and this has led them to increase the variety of experiences through good partnerships with a range of providers. Enhanced experiences include appealing sports activities and involvement in the 'Forest School' initiative. Pupils, thrilled to have a golf lesson, remarked 'We have learned to chip today!' Parents are delighted in the way these lively experiences are enhancing their children's education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is very good. Staff know pupils and their families very well. The family atmosphere helps to nurture pupils and meet their needs well. Safeguarding, child protection and risk assessments meet requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified promptly. A variety of support, including good links with professionals from external agencies, helps them to make good progress. The school does as much as it can to promote good attendance.

Pupils benefit from good verbal guidance during lessons. This is consolidated through good marking of pupils' completed work. Useful dialogue often develops between the pupil and the teacher helping pupils to be clear about how to improve. Target setting is established and promoted in class displays and exercise books. There is some inconsistency of approaches between subjects which slightly restricts their effectiveness. A positive feature in science books is the inclusion of success measures so that pupils can check their progress. Literacy books feature prominent targets, revised regularly; this approach is not yet evident in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. The recently appointed headteacher provides good and purposeful leadership. Her effective collaboration with an experienced assistant headteacher gives the school stability and clear direction. The small enthusiastic staff team are supported well by governors. Leaders' good collaborative monitoring has helped to produce an accurate audit and slightly modest self-evaluation. Progress towards improving development planning has not been as quick. The current plan lacks clarity due to an abundance of targets across a wide spectrum of provision. It does not focus sufficiently on the key priorities and actions that can be undertaken realistically by a small staff team.

Governors probe accountability well. Their illustrated, evaluative, well focused reports demonstrate a professional approach to the 'critical friend' role. Leadership is determined to raise standards by setting challenging targets that expect faster than expected progress. It is ambitious for further success. With good improvement made the school has good capacity for further development.

Leaders promote community cohesion satisfactorily. They recognise the geographical setting of the school requires more action to improve pupils' understanding of the richness and diversity of Modern Britain. Leaders have recently established a partnership with an urban setting school and an international link is being pursued.

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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?	2
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	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?	2

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?	3
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**

6 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Embleton Vincent Edwards Church of England First School, Northumberland, NE66 3XR

Thank you for making our day in your school so enjoyable. We enjoyed meeting you, visiting your classrooms, looking at your books and displays and talking to you about your school. You were friendly and polite and we were impressed by your outstanding behaviour. These are the things we found out about your school during our visit.

You attend a good school. All the people who work in school are doing a good job. Most aspects are good and your personal development is outstanding. You value staying healthy and you feel safe. You enjoy school and attend well. Your school is indeed a happy and smiley place to be! The staff provide you with good care. Those who need extra help get good support. You are set clear targets to work towards. Although the curriculum is good more time could be given to help you to learn about life and different cultures in other parts of Britain. Your school leaders are keen to involve you in making the school even better. Their written plans are crammed full of lots of important things to do and this could be simplified. Good teaching ensures you make good progress throughout the school. You play your part by working hard in lessons. Most of you have reached above average standards by Year 2 and usually you are above the expected level by Year 4. Well done!

We have left some suggestions about things the school could do better. We have asked school leaders to:

- simplify how the school plans for the future with a clearer focus on the most important priorities
- help you to understand that life in modern Britain is often very different from the rural coastal setting where you live.

We wish you and all the staff the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Derek Sleightholme and Wendy Richardson

Inspectors