

Silver Tree Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123350
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	327887
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Rosemary Rodger

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	156
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 Jimmy Jamieson
Headteacher	Mr John Trueman
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Durham Road Ushaw Moor County Durham DH7 7LF
Telephone number	0191 373 0622
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. The area served by the school has above average levels of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Most pupils are White British with a small number having English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for a free school meal. The headteacher has been in post for almost a year. Recent awards include Activemark, Healthy Schools and Investors in Pupils. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Reception class. There is a pre-school on site that is part of a Sure Start Centre.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Silver Tree school is satisfactory in its effectiveness. Steady progress since the previous inspection is beginning to bring about improvements in all aspects of the school's work. Actions to raise standards are sound, although this is less evident in the current Year 6 because of gaps in prior learning. Current standards are below average in Year 6, but pupils are making at least satisfactory progress based on their below average attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. This is because of the impact of improvements to teaching and the use of assessment information to target pupils in need of additional support.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Steps to curb the misbehaviour of a small minority of pupils are not yet fully effective according to the views of some parents and pupils. A daily 'wake and shake' session for all pupils is helping them to understand the importance of keeping fit. Attendance is just below the national figure but improving. Pupils generally enjoy school and speak with great enthusiasm about the wide range of sporting activities and enrichment to the curriculum in recent months. Opportunities provided for pupils to apply their basic skills across the curriculum are inconsistent. Where this is happening, it is done well. Year 5 pupils, for example, applied their oracy skills with confidence and clarity as they described how they created a film production of the 'Silver Tree Olympics'. The care, guidance and support pupils receive are satisfactory. There is a new assessment system in place to track the progress of pupils that is developing well.

Teaching is satisfactory. Most pupils learn adequately, but at times the introductions to lessons are overlong, leading to some disinterest. At other times, especially in numeracy lessons, there is too little account taken of the range of pupils' abilities, meaning that less able pupils struggle and more able are insufficiently challenged. Teaching in literacy is improving because of the impact of recent training for staff. There is a marked improvement in the day-to-day assessments in lessons. Marking is thorough and pupils know what they have to learn because of the targets in their books. Pupils also said how useful they found marking each other's work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The headteacher has rightly made improving teaching and learning a key priority. Good use is made of external support to assist in improvements to assessment and teaching. The enlarged leadership team is well focused on improving learning and has a secure capacity to move the school forward. Governors are well informed and committed. They appreciate the good lines of communication with the headteacher. The setting up of a governors' surgery for parents is a good idea. Parents say they are pleased there are more out-of-school activities and they value the school's 'open door' policy. These factors are all helping to develop the school's reputation in the local community. The school's contribution to promoting community cohesion is satisfactory. For example, pupils celebrate the cultural diversity in the school through welcoming displays for the very small number of minority ethnic pupils. The school provides satisfactory value for money. It has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection and has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children achieve satisfactorily based on their below age-related attainment in all areas of learning when they start in Reception. Learning in personal, social and emotional development and in aspects of communication, language and literacy is good. Children are encouraged to develop independence and make choices in a safe environment. Learning is less secure in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy because of weaknesses in how children understand calculation. There are sometimes missed opportunities for children to apply their knowledge of numbers in their play. Improving basic reading skills is a priority and there are opportunities for children to work independently in, for example, the well resourced story den and to practise writing and saying the names of key letters and sounds. The curriculum is satisfactory and provides a fair balance between indoor and outdoor learning. There are clearly planned adult-led activities, but they are variable in quality because sometimes children are not encouraged to discuss their understanding. The welfare of children is satisfactory and well exemplified in the care for the children and the attention to assessing the risks in the outdoor area. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a good partnership with parents. A weekly family learning course is well subscribed and provides a firm foundation for parents' understanding of what their children are learning and how to help them at home. Links with the pre-school on site are good and ensure that children are well prepared for the transition from one phase to the other through the daily shared outdoor play and visits between the two areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils' work matches their wide range of abilities and reduce the length of introductory sessions to improve the quality of teaching.
- Provide pupils with greater consistency in applying their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- Improve the behaviour of a small minority of pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Based on their broadly average standards on entry to Year 1 and average standards by the end of Year 2, pupils achieve satisfactorily in Key Stage 1 in reading and mathematics, although less well in writing. Recent actions to improve writing are beginning to make a sound impact on improving progress. Current standards are below average in Year 6. However, based on those pupils' low standards at the end of Year 2, they are achieving satisfactorily. Results of the 2008 national tests in Year 6 improved on the previous year. A past legacy of underachievement is particularly marked in the classes of older pupils in the gaps they show in basic skills of calculation, handwriting and spelling. Effective actions are in place to rectify these weaknesses through improvements in teaching and in the positive attitudes of most pupils to learning. Progress in lessons is satisfactory and sometimes good. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well in Key Stage 1 and satisfactorily in Key Stage 2. There is very small number of pupils with English as an additional language who achieve as well as their peers in class.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, as is their well-being. The vast majority of pupils behave well in class and in the playground but the occasional irrational and unpleasant misbehaviour of a few individuals causes concern to many other pupils and reduces their enjoyment of school and subdues the atmosphere in lessons. For a school of this size and circumstance, the frequency of exclusion is high but the reasons for excluding individuals are justified. The indignation of most pupils towards incidents which result in sanctions reflects their understanding of what is right and what is wrong. In lessons, pupils work well together, helping each other to achieve through mutual support. Attendance is below average but has improved over the past three terms to the point where it is approaching national expectations. Accidents are rigorously reported, but the relatively high number of accidents suggests that pupils are only moderately aware of how their actions and the actions of others can affect safety around the school. In other respects, pupils take good advice about what they can do to keep safe and lead healthy lives. They rejoice in their sporting achievements and most love physical activity, witnessed by their enthusiastic participation in sporting activities and robust playground activities. Members of the school council are proud of their position and talk positively about what they contribute to the community of the school and what the school as a whole contributes to the broader community, for instance through public performances by the school choir or by raising funds for charity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Improvements to teaching since the last inspection are evident in the improving attitudes and behaviour of pupils in most lessons, the quality of marking and involvement of pupils in assessing their learning. Teaching is satisfactory with good features in Years 5 and 6. The impact of recently introduced assessment systems and the use of uniform planning formats are beginning to improve pupils' learning. There is, however, a degree of inconsistency in the match of work to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly in numeracy. What pupils are expected to learn, the good pace and sharing success criteria are features of the good teaching. For example, Year 6 pupils used a checklist of features to include in a play script as a prompt to help complete their work accurately. Pupils in such lessons work hard because they know what to do. An effective feature of many lessons is group or paired working which helps to provide pupils with more responsibility and greater independence, for example in a creative music and art lesson in Year 2. Overlong introductory sessions sometimes lead to pupils losing interest. Discipline is effective on a day-to-day basis. A few parents have expressed concerns about this, although, on the whole, parents are satisfied with the school because their children are happy and enjoy their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is satisfactory and improving as a result of the introduction of many out-of-school clubs and activities to enrich pupils' learning. Recent work on improving healthy lifestyles through improvements to school meals and checking packed lunches is evident and reflected in the recent Healthy School award. Pupils' personal and social

skills are developing satisfactorily through residential visits and roles and responsibilities around school. Links with a local secondary school help to ease the transition to the pupils' next stage of learning and to develop their information and communication technology skills. Visits to local historical sites and more innovative activities such as working with a local film company are effectively enriching the curriculum. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is improving because of greater rigour in their individual education plans and focused support in basic skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support of pupils are satisfactory overall. Most of the time, the physical care and support of pupils are good. Close attention is paid to making sure that only suitable adults have contact with pupils, a good overview of health and safety is kept and possible risk in activities is carefully assessed. Most parents are very happy that their children are safe and well looked after at school. Where they express justifiable concern is when their children's enjoyment of school is spoiled by the occasional misbehaviour of a very small minority. The school is working with members of the local authority behaviour support service to resolve this situation. Academic guidance is satisfactory. It is improving as a fuller and more accurate picture of pupils' progress is emerging through a new tracking and assessment system. However, gaps in the information and some historical inaccuracies sometimes lead to a mismatch between the work pupils are set and their relative ability.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving because of the impact of the headteacher's key focus on improving standards and pupils' achievement. The senior leadership team is now fully representative of the whole school and works well as a team with a shared agenda to lead improvements in teaching and learning. The school's self-evaluation is an accurate reflection of the strengths and areas for development. It is based on fairly rigorous monitoring and has put suitable actions in place to improve teaching, which have not yet had time to have sufficient impact in some classes. Target-setting is realistic and based on an analysis of pupils' attainment and progress, but it is only adequately challenging, particularly for average to lower-attaining pupils. The governors are supportive of the school on a day-to-day basis. They value the openness and clear communication with the headteacher. They have made a good impact on raising the profile of the school in the local community by working with parents through the newly formed friends of the school. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. The school is developing links with the local community and through family learning is beginning to engage with hard to reach families. The curriculum helps to develop pupils' understanding of the global community, and fundraising raises their awareness of other cultures in light of the lack of cultural diversity in their own area. Parents are very satisfied with the school in almost all respects. The arrangements to ensure pupils are fully safeguarded meet requirements.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

13 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Silver Tree Primary School, Durham, DH7 7LF

I am writing to thank you all for the welcome given to me while working in your school recently. Please thank your parents too for their comments about your school. I have judged that you attend a satisfactory school that is improving in most areas.

This is what is satisfactory about your school.

- The standards you reach are average in mathematics and science and below average in English but improving.
- Those of you who need support to help your work improve enjoy going to the information and communication technology suite to practise your phonics.
- You enjoy school, particularly the after school clubs and all the sporting activities that take place.
- Most of you work hard and know what to do to improve your work.
- The school works hard to make your learning enjoyable.
- Your school is better than it was and does not need helping as much as it did because of the changes your headteacher is making.

There are three areas that could be better. I have asked your school to make sure that the work you do matches your needs so that those of you who are very clever have challenging activities and that those of you who need more help have work that is not too difficult. I have also asked that you are encouraged to apply all the basic skills you learn in other subjects as well as in literacy and numeracy lessons. Finally, I have asked that steps are taken to improve the behaviour of the very small number of children who sometimes disrupt your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Rodger

Lead inspector