

The Avenue Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111595
Local Authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	337706
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Carole Snee

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs A Barnes
Headteacher	Mrs Judith Dodd
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, saw all teachers present teach, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. Over half of the inspection was spent looking at pupils' learning. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at tracking data, assessment books, planning, the school improvement plan, key policy and procedure documentation and 65 questionnaires returned from parents and carers.

- rates of progress for all groups of pupils
- improvement, particularly in achievement, and leadership and management, since the last inspection
- the impact of teaching and learning on raising standards
- the contribution of middle leaders to improving progress.

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than the average sized primary school. It is on a split site, set in extensive grounds. Fewer pupils are entitled to free school meals than the national average and most pupils are of a White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is almost half the national average. The school draws most of its pupils from its own nursery and classes are organised in single-age groups. There is extensive after-school provision and a Parent and Toddler group, Toddle In, which rents accommodation from the school. This is not managed by the school and is subject to a separate inspection. The roll has declined in recent years; however, this decline has halted. At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher has been in post for just over a year and staffing has undergone some instability due to redundancies.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The Avenue Primary School is a satisfactory school. This judgement matches the school's own largely accurate self-evaluation. Pupils overwhelmingly say they enjoy coming to school. Staff work extremely hard and effectively to provide a good standard of care and support, and are proud to be part of the school's team. Middle leaders are still in the process of developing their leadership role and this is being supported by the very good partnership between senior leaders and members of the governing body. Since the last inspection, leaders have brought about improvements in marking and assessments, but these have not been in place long enough to have an impact on standards. Capacity to improve is, therefore, satisfactory.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills broadly in line with those expected of children their age and they make good progress during their time there. Pupils reach standards that are well above average at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1 and upper Key Stage 2 teaching is effective, with high expectations of pupils. Lessons are usually fun, relevant and challenging for all groups of pupils. Progress is slower in lower Key Stage 2 because assessment is not consistently used to ensure that work challenges all pupils and lessons do not always capture their interest and enthusiasm. Because of the inconsistency in Key Stage 2 the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

The curriculum is satisfactory. While the school has taken opportunities to enrich its provision through interesting projects on pictures with a local museum and effective partnerships such as the excellent sporting links, it does not yet fully match the needs and interests of pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite, respectful of adults and each other, and work very well together, developing useful skills of independence and teamwork. They show great concern for the well-being of others, even those they have never met, such as in their magnificent response to the Haiti earthquake victims.

Safeguarding arrangements are good in all areas. The administrative team ensures that records are meticulously kept and updated. Pupils feel able to turn readily to adults in the school for support and this helps ensure that they feel safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the consistency of progress in Key Stage 2 by:
 - using data effectively to set clear targets for improvement
 - providing planned opportunities to use the good practice in the school to

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improve the standard of teaching overall

- using rigorous monitoring to identify and address weaknesses.
- Increase the contribution of middle leaders to improving the rate of progress by:
 - clarifying their roles and responsibilities so that they understand clearly what is required of them
 - monitoring both the quality and impact of their contributions on a regular basis and reporting the results to the governing body.
- Improve the richness of the curriculum by:
 - matching it more closely to the needs, interests and abilities of pupils, so that lessons are consistently creative and enable pupils to learn through challenging and enjoyable activities.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils listen carefully in lessons and are keen to do well. In the best lessons they are interested in and challenged by their work. An example of this was a lesson in upper Key Stage 2 where pupils worked very well together to identify different kinds of writing. Where pupils are challenged they make faster gains in their knowledge and understanding. This is particularly the case in Key Stage 1 and upper Key Stage 2. They do not always learn as quickly in lower Key Stage 2 because the work set is less tailored to their individual needs and interests.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Progress is stronger in English than in mathematics and girls make better progress than boys in both English and mathematics.

Pupils have a good understanding of how important it is to keep safe and healthy, and they have a well-developed social, moral and cultural understanding. They are articulate, have a strong sense of fairness and display a high level of empathy with other cultural groups. They do not always, however, understand fully the differences between their own beliefs and those of other groups in the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and additional adults in classes offer good levels of support. In the best teaching good use is made of technology such as interactive whiteboards and personalised computer programs to engage and motivate pupils. The curriculum, which is currently under revision, is enriched with some exciting opportunities to capture pupils' interest and enthusiasm, and the school is planning to extend these through the recently introduced topics. Visits, for example to Ripon Cathedral, and visitors also enrich the curriculum, but opportunities are not always taken to use these to provide an exciting stimulus for learning. There are times when there is an over-reliance on text books, grammatical exercises and standardised worksheet-type activities. This means that work is not always accurately matched to the abilities of all groups of pupils and does not always challenge them to achieve even higher standards. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities which offer opportunities to extend pupils' involvement and learning.

Care, guidance and support are good. Individual pupils with specific needs are well supported by very effective teaching assistants. The school has taken a very proactive approach to improving attendance by treating holidays in term time as unauthorised absences. Good guidance on how to make healthy choices is embedded through activities such as healthy food workshops for parents and carers, and children, and particularly through the very comprehensive and high-quality sporting opportunities offered as part of the extended provision.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school. She is very well supported by the recently appointed deputy headteacher and an ambitious governing body. All staff, including governors, have a clear commitment to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. However, leadership roles and responsibilities do not always reflect the needs of the school. As a result, while there are pockets of good practice, with high expectations and an ambitious drive for improvement, these are not consistently embedded across the school and progress in improving is not as swift as it might be. While the school gathers a wealth of data, this is not always analysed rigorously enough to inform clear targets for improvement. The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses; the recently appointed Chairperson, very ably supported by a number of governors with specific expertise, is keen to extend the role of critical friend in tackling weaknesses and supporting the school to continue to improve.

The school engages well with parents and carers. There are opportunities for them to share in their children's learning, such as in the shared construction of fairground models for a recent topic. Effective partnerships with other schools and external agencies promote both the learning and well-being of pupils. Safeguarding procedures are strong, and there are many opportunities to promote community cohesion through visits to care homes and generous fundraising for a number of events and organisations. However, as pupils make satisfactory progress, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy being in school and appreciate the efforts of teachers to make them feel safe and secure. They enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills broadly matching those expected for children of their age. They make consistently good progress in their first year because the balance between the indoor and outdoor play is very good, as are the opportunities for independent learning and adult-led activities. Progress is inconsistent in the Reception class. It is good in the outdoor learning, where the older children enjoy supporting the younger children. Progress in whole-class sessions is satisfactory, with some learning not matching individuals' needs closely enough. Standards last year were particularly high in personal, social and emotional development and in physical development. They were lower than national expectations in creative development. By the time they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage, however, overall all groups of children make good progress in all subject areas.

Welfare is good, with members of the whole teaching team working very well together to provide a caring, secure and supportive context for children's learning. This leads to consistently good progress in children's personal development.

Leadership and management are good and are having a strong impact on extending provision. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a very clear vision of what needs to be done to improve the unit further and has a determination to drive this forward. She has devised a very effective system for recording assessments which enables all staff to have a clear overview of next steps in children's learning and ensures that provision is closely matched to individual children's needs.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and the education it provides for their children. They are particularly appreciative about the emphasis the school places on keeping children safe and the support given for pupils from particular faith groups. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers stated that their children enjoyed school. No significant negative issues emerged from the questionnaires.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Avenue Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 209 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	49	31	48	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	32	49	31	48	2	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	42	31	48	7	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	46	29	45	6	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	28	43	31	48	6	9	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	38	29	45	11	17	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	49	28	43	4	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	42	33	51	4	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	43	29	45	6	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	26	35	54	8	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	20	42	65	8	12	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	29	35	54	9	14	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	45	30	46	5	8	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Dear Pupils

The whole inspection team would like to thank you for welcoming us into your school and talking to us about all the things you are proud of. We were very impressed by all the fundraising you do – especially your magnificent efforts in raising money for Haiti recently. We also thought your behaviour was good, and we really liked the way you looked after each other with your buddy system.

We think you go to a satisfactory school and it does lots of things very well, such as keeping you safe and giving you lots of opportunities for sport and after-school activities. The staff work hard to look after you and help you when you need it. Your governors are really interested in the way you learn and are very keen to help you all to make your school an even better place to be.

By the time you leave The Avenue, you are usually reaching higher standards than many children of your age. This is because you listen very well in class, you help each other and you try hard with your work, both in school and at home. Some of the teaching and the work you do in your lessons is good, but some is not always as good as the best.

We have asked your teachers to make lessons more exciting and fun for you, so lessons are all as good as each other. We have also asked them to ensure that they know how to challenge you to achieve your very best. This will help you to learn more quickly. We have asked your school leaders to ensure that all your teachers know exactly what they have to do to improve the way you learn and to check on how the school is improving. You can help by talking to your teachers about the kind of things that really interest you and the ways in which you learn best.

We wish you all the best for the future – we are sure you will all work together to make your school a really great place to be.

Yours sincerely

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