

Howden-Le-Wear Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114061
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338289
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Christine Millett

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Wendy Charlton/Mr A Gardner
Headteacher	Mrs V McCourt
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited five lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work, data on progress, monitoring reports, policies and planning. They received and read 16 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the levels of progress being made in English across the school
- to what extent developments to the curriculum have been embedded and the opportunities they offer for improving skills in English
- the consistency in the quality of teaching across the school.

Information about the school

Howden-Le-Wear is a small village primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds while a few are of mixed heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is the number eligible for free school meals. There are four mixed-aged classes in school. Reception children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught alongside those from a private nursery, which shares the premises. The school runs a breakfast club and there is a privately run after-school club, which was not included in this inspection. The nursery and after-school club were inspected separately in January 2009. The school has the Healthy School Award, Active Mark (gold), the International School Award (foundation level) and Financial Management Standard in Schools.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Howden-Le-Wear is a good school. It has successfully created a safe and welcoming environment for its pupils. They clearly enjoy school and participate enthusiastically in the many learning opportunities on offer. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is also reflected in their above average attendance. Pupils agree that, 'We are very lucky to have such an amazing school and teachers.' All pupils, irrespective of their starting points or abilities, make good progress overall. This is as a result of good teaching and the quality of care, guidance and support, which pupils receive.

Attainment varies from year to year owing to the small cohorts and significant numbers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, attainment is broadly average overall. The school has rightly identified writing as an area for development across the school and is working hard to bring about improvements though this is yet to make an impact upon standards.

Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and local community. Older pupils take their role as playground buddies very seriously. Most pupils are aware of the need for a healthy lifestyle and regular exercise. All staff ensure that pupils' time in school is enjoyable and rewarding. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage take part in imaginative, well-planned activities with great enthusiasm. Older pupils say they really enjoy their work, especially in art and information and communication technology. Behaviour is good in classes and during playtime and pupils show respect for adults and each other.

Relationships throughout the school are strong. The headteacher sets the tone by showing a high level of concern for all pupils, especially the most vulnerable. All pupils speak about how safe they feel in school. The parents who responded to the questionnaire reinforce this view. Good links with the church, chapel, local schools and external agencies provide pupils with additional learning experiences. The curriculum promotes community cohesion to a satisfactory degree. There are strong links with the local community, but there are insufficient activities to provide pupils with a deeper understanding of the wide range of cultures and beliefs found nationally.

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues raised in the previous inspection report. It has developed its target setting process so that pupils are now well aware of the level they are working at and what they have to do to improve.

Regular assessments feed into the tracking system and these enable teachers to ensure that work is matched appropriately to pupils' needs. Progress is closely monitored in the main. However, there is too little moderation of pupils' writing in order to determine the accuracy of teachers' assessments. Pupils are now involved in paired and group work, so

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sharing their learning with others. The school's self-evaluation procedures are robust and leaders have a clear and effective commitment to improving provision. These factors, along with improved standards, show that the school has a good capacity for sustaining further development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards in writing across the school by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their imaginative skills and vocabulary choices
 - including more opportunities for developing writing skills across the curriculum
 - increasing opportunities for whole school moderation of writing tasks.
- Provide more opportunities to promote community cohesion by extending pupils' experiences and understanding of the wide range of cultures and beliefs found nationally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils develop good attitudes towards learning as they move up through the school. They enjoy learning and collaborate well when working in groups or in pairs. In class, pupils listen carefully and are keen to answer questions. Most express their views clearly and are able to give good explanations, providing answers that are relevant to the lesson. This was seen in a mathematics lesson where pupils used appropriate mathematical language confidently to explain how to work out equivalent fractions.

Children start school with skills and knowledge that are often well below those expected for their age. By the time they leave Reception they have made good progress and this continues through Key Stage 1. Younger pupils do not have a rich vocabulary and their writing shows a lack of imagination and variety. However, standards by the end of Year 2 are still below average as a result of the very low starting points. Good progress continues through Key Stage 2 so that by Year 6 standards are broadly average overall but higher in mathematics and science than in English. Although some pupils reached Level 5 in reading similar levels were not attained in writing. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good because of the well-targeted support they receive.

Pupils show strong spiritual, moral and social awareness. They mix easily with others and have a strong sense of right and wrong and what is fair. They show respect for each other but lack experience of the range of cultures and beliefs common in Britain. The school council and playground buddies make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Pupils are active in raising funds for various charities such as Children in Need. They are enthusiastic about the nutritious school dinners and grow and cook their own vegetables. Improving basic skills, confident use of information and communication technology, financial awareness through links with HSBC and overall good manners contribute greatly to future economic well-being.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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?

Teachers engage pupils' interests in learning effectively through the use of the interactive whiteboards and other visual aids. Planning is thorough and builds well on previous learning. Behaviour in lessons is good. Very occasionally, when the pace of the lesson drops, a few pupils lose concentration. Teachers have high expectations, good subject knowledge and consider all levels of ability in their questioning. Work is marked regularly and pupils are aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve their work.

The curriculum is still developing and has been designed to suit the mixed-age classes as well as to successfully include cross-curricular themes. The good links between subjects are well supported through first-hand experiences wherever possible. These include a wide range of visits and visitors. Typically pupils say, 'I like coming to school because I learn new and interesting things each day.' However, opportunities for independent writing for different purposes across the curriculum are inconsistent. A modern foreign language, a good range of extra-curricular activities, as well as musical instrument tuition, also enhances the curriculum. Taking into account the size of the

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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school there is an extensive range of after-school clubs, which the pupils appreciate and enjoy.

Pupils feel well supported by the school and know to whom they could turn if they have a problem. They feel safe and know that their concerns are taken seriously. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well met through close liaison between teachers, support staff and the special needs coordinator. Effective use is made of outside agencies to support both pupils and parents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The educational direction of the school is firmly rooted in the desire to improve provision and raise standards in a caring and supportive environment. The school offers equality of opportunity to all pupils and rigorously monitors their progress. These ambitions are driven by the headteacher and shared amongst staff and the wider school community. Governors' meetings are conducted effectively and governors both support and challenge the school when necessary. The governing body has been diligent in ensuring the school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding and protecting pupils.

Relationships with parents are good. Regular newsletters and weekly planners keep parents up to date with what is happening in school. The school operates an open-door policy and parents are encouraged to consult with staff as soon as they have a question. The school has good relationships with other schools in the cluster and pupils benefit from the joint events in which they come together. There are strong links with the secondary school to which pupils go after their time at Howden-Le-Wear. These develop pupils' confidence in moving on to the next phase of their education. There are also some links internationally but few nationally, such as with pupils from very different communities to this rural setting. Thus pupils are limited in their understanding of modern British society.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

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	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage learn in a stimulating and secure environment where their health, safety and well-being are given a high priority. Reception children learn alongside those attending a private nursery, therefore they settle quickly and the good relationships with parents have already been forged. Provision is outstanding and children quickly begin to explore the wealth of highly imaginative activities set out for them. Children listen to and respond well to staff showing high levels of confidence and the willingness to try out new ideas and share their thoughts.

This Early Years Foundation Stage unit was created in September 2008 and since that time has been well led and managed by the knowledgeable and dedicated Reception teacher. All staff are totally committed to providing the best education possible for the children in their care. There has not been time yet for the excellent provision to influence fully children's learning and progress. Moreover, the full impact of this close partnership is yet to be realised. Nevertheless, from starting points, which are well below those expected for their age, children make good progress in learning and development as a result of teaching which is good with outstanding features. Thorough, high-quality observations and regular assessments feed into exceptionally good planning, ensuring that skills are built upon and that activities match need. Parents are aware of their child's targets and receive a weekly update with photographs and a rhyme to practise at home. All activities cover all aspects of learning both indoors and out. The outdoor area is equally as exciting as the indoor area and used in all weathers. Staff are highly skilled at maintaining a balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities, enabling children to find things out for themselves. They are very effective in helping children develop necessary language skills and cooperate with one another.

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

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	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

In responses to the questionnaires, parents are very positive about the school. They all agreed that their children enjoyed school and were kept safe. 'From day one my child has been happy at Howden school.' is a comment typical of parents' views. All value the support they receive and feel their views are considered. A very small minority had different concerns, which were investigated, but the inspection found no evidence to support these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Howden-Le-Wear 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 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 73 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	56	7	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	10	63	6	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	7	44	9	56	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	50	6	38	1	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	8	50	7	44	1	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	38	10	63	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	50	7	44	1	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)	7	44	8	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	44	8	50	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	25	9	56	1	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	38	10	63	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	31	8	50	1	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	63	4	25	1	6	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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.



10 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Howden-Le-Wear Primary School, Crook DL15 8HJ

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently; a special thank you to those of you who gave up their time to talk to us. Many of you told us that Howden-Le-Wear is a good school and we agree with you.

What I most liked about your school is that:

- you are friendly, polite and friendly to visitors and each other
- your behaviour is good
- you get off to a good start in Reception and make good progress over your time in school to reach average standards
- you enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn
- adults look after you well and make sure you are safe
- teaching is good and your teachers work hard to make sure your lessons are interesting and fun
- your school is well led and managed and almost all your parents are very pleased with the school and the help you receive
- you show a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe
- you contribute to the life of the school and local community
- you are well prepared for the next stages in your education.

To make your school even better, this is what I would like to happen now:

- that your teachers provide you with more opportunities to use your imagination in your writing
- you are given more opportunities to develop your writing skills in other subjects
- that all your teachers are involved in levelling your writing
- for you to be given more opportunities to learn about and experience other cultures and beliefs found in Britain today.

I know that you will continue to help your teachers to carry on making your school even better by continuing to work hard. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Christine Millett

Lead inspector

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