

Forest of Teesdale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114100
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338296
Inspection dates	2–3 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	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Reuben Atkinson
Headteacher	Mr Michael Watt
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Forest-in-Teesdale Barnard Castle County Durham DL12 0HA
Telephone number	01833 622220
Fax number	01833 622220
Email address	forest@durhamlearning.net

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited three lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils. She observed the school's work and looked at the school development plan, analyses of pupils' attainment and progress, lesson plans, minutes of governors' meetings and pupils' work. The inspector analysed nine parental questionnaires.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at the following:

- developments taking place to reshape the curriculum
- the impact of standards in writing on pupils' overall attainment in English
- attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage and the extent to which provision is meeting the needs of the children.

Information about the school

This is a very small, isolated primary school serving a widespread rural area in Upper Teesdale. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals.

The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a small group of Reception aged children who are taught alongside pupils in Year 1 and 2. The school has recently had a play area added to the outdoor facilities for the youngest pupils.

The school has received the International School Award, Healthy Schools Award, Active Mark 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

Forest of Teesdale is a good school. It is extremely successful in creating a caring and supportive environment for its pupils and their families.

As this is a very small school, sizes of cohorts are exceptionally small and vary from year-to-year. Generally, children start school with skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age. They make good progress and by Year 6 reach broadly average standards. Standards in writing are lower than those in reading, particularly in Key Stage 1, mainly because pupils have too few opportunities to write for different purposes.

Pupils and parents are unanimous in their belief that the school provides a safe and secure environment. 'Everyone takes care of me.' was a typical comment written by a pupil. These views are borne out by the good safeguarding arrangements and procedures that are in place. Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in the high level of attendance, exemplary behaviour and the enthusiasm with which pupils take part in the many learning opportunities on offer. The exceptional level of care, guidance and support pupils receive also contributes to these positive aspects of pupils' personal development. Pupils' contributions to the life of the school and wider communities are considerable. Attainment in basic skills, the confident use of information and communication technology (ICT) and opportunities for enterprise, such as growing and selling their own vegetables, go a long way towards preparing pupils well for the future. Pupils are extremely polite, friendly and keen to help each other. Older pupils present very positive role models for the younger children. They are very caring not only of each other but their local environment and recognise that they are caretakers of this area of outstanding natural beauty, taking this responsibility very seriously.

Teaching overall is good. However, past difficulties in staffing have led to inconsistencies in provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This has been resolved and the school is now putting plans in place to ensure the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage matches that for the older pupils. Assessment is used well to track progress as well as inform pupils of the next steps in their learning. Pupils enjoy learning because work is well chosen, reflecting their interests as well as needs and abilities. The school has started to move towards a more creative approach to designing the curriculum and planning stronger links between subjects. This is yet to be embedded across the school and have full impact on pupils' attainment. The school has not yet introduced a modern foreign language.

The school is well led and managed by the enthusiastic headteacher, ably supported by the committed governing body. Since his appointment in April 2008 the headteacher has

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skilfully guided the school through unsettled times. The school is now in a position to build on its many successes and focus on the priorities identified in the school development plan. Rigorous and accurate self-evaluation completes the picture for good capacity for sustained improvement. Links with parents and external agencies and providers ensure the best interests of pupils are met. Community cohesion, at all levels, is outstanding. Every child is treated as an individual, which helps them develop the confidence and independence to cope with the next stages in their education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- *¿* Raise standards in writing throughout the school, and in particular in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- Continue to develop the curriculum by:
 - embedding cross-curricular links
 - ensuring curriculum planning includes more opportunities for writing for
- different purposes
 - including a modern foreign language.
- Improve provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - offering staff opportunities to observe good practice
 - reviewing resources, particularly for outdoor play, and making better use of the outdoor area to extend children's learning
 - ensuring all staff carry out observations more frequently and use the information to plan next steps in learning.

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

All groups of pupils make good progress. In lessons, pupils are keen to do well and are enthusiastic about their learning. Due to extremely small cohorts, test results fluctuate from year-to-year but generally pupils reach broadly average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. Disruptions to teaching and learning in the past have led to slower progress in Key Stage 1 and below average standards in writing. Work seen in lessons and in pupils' books shows that progress accelerates through Key Stage 2. This is because pupils are well taught. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in science in 2009 was above average while standards in mathematics and English remained average. Although some pupils reached Level 5 in reading, similar levels were not attained in writing. This is due to missed opportunities for developing writing skills, particularly in the lower part of the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in school and through links with external agencies. Work is well matched to their needs ensuring they make similar levels of progress as their peers.

All pupils said they feel safe in school and were extremely confident that if they had a problem they knew who they could turn to for help. The suggestion box in the classroom was used regularly as a means of communicating ideas for making school

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'even better'. Pupils are well aware of a wide range of healthy living issues. They all enjoy the nutritious school dinners to which they sometimes contribute ingredients from their vegetable plots. They have a clear understanding of the importance of keeping fit. Pupils are proud of their school and the community in which they live and participate in many local events such as singing in the nearest village or planting a wild-flower meadow. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and evident in their reflective, mature attitudes, music and organisation of events.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

This is an exceptionally caring school that places great importance on developing pupils' self-esteem and confidence, so preparing them well for life beyond school. Adults know pupils well and respond positively to their needs.

Teaching overall is good. In the best lessons well-planned activities help pupils develop basic skills because they are presented through meaningful real-life situations. Accurate assessments are now carried out regularly to ensure the needs of all learners are being met. Pupils' work is usually marked with the pupil present, so they benefit from

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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one-to-one explanations of the next steps in learning. These relate to pupils' targets. Pupils say they find the improvement points they are given very useful. The school has plans in place to ensure that best practice is shared to improve teaching further.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets all requirements. The school is in the process of redesigning the curriculum that focuses on the systematic development of skills through a cross-curricular approach. This is being introduced through themes such as a recent one where the whole school was engaged in designing wallpaper in the style of William Morris using a selection of media including ICT. There are plans to build on such successes to promote more opportunities for developing pupils' writing skills. The curriculum is enriched to ensure pupils enjoy experiences they wouldn't otherwise have due to the isolated location and restricted space. For example, pupils travel to another school for an afternoon of physical education. Many other visits and visitors, such as crew from HMS Bulwark, provide other valuable insights into the lives of others.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The dedicated headteacher and enthusiastic staff and governors share the same drive and ambition for the school, and are totally committed to providing the best education possible and equal opportunities for all pupils. They face challenging circumstances due to low numbers, rural isolation and in the recruitment of staff. The strenuous efforts made by the headteacher to limit the impact of these are one of the key reasons for the school's success. The school development plan is directly focused on improving pupils' achievement. Good use is being made of targets and these are becoming increasingly demanding. Governors are fully supportive of the school and play an important role in monitoring and challenging its performance. Risk assessments are carried out regularly and safeguarding and health and safety requirements are well met. The promotion of community cohesion is extremely strong. Pupils from school take part in a great many local events. In addition to being at the heart of the local community the school has reached out to a special school and urban primary schools in Great Britain as well as establishing video conferencing links with many pupils in schools in several countries all over the world. Many international visitors from these schools have been welcomed into school so extending pupils' knowledge of other faiths and cultures and reinforcing existing positive attitudes to diversity.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

From starting points which are below expectations for their age children make satisfactory progress overall though it is better in personal, social and emotional development. Children enjoy their learning and demonstrate the ability to concentrate on an activity that interests them for sustained periods of time. This was seen during an art activity in the painstaking way in which they prepared their blocks ready for printing. They behave very well indeed and, following the lead of the older pupils in the class, respond quickly to instructions and help tidy things away. They are kind and considerate towards each other. Children are safe and happy in a secure, welcoming environment. An outdoor area has been added recently to extend learning opportunities but it is not yet used to best effect and resources are limited. The new class teacher and teaching assistant are beginning to work collaboratively to plan activities and identify assessment opportunities. Observations are recorded and are beginning to inform planning as well as go into children's learning journeys, but these occasions are too infrequent. Teaching provides clear instructions with some opportunities for independent enquiry, as was seen in one outdoor session when children were observed searching excitedly for objects bigger or smaller than themselves. Once identified the children were then given cameras in order to photograph what had been discovered. The chance to write the name of the object was overlooked and so an opportunity for practising writing skills was missed. Adults working in the Early Years Foundation Stage have not had the chance to observe good practice in other settings in order to help them improve their teaching.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and governors have been working tirelessly to maintain continuity and consistency in provision. Sound plans

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are in place now to develop provision further. Links with parents are good and they are very happy with how well their children are cared for.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

All parents responded to the questionnaire. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. All feel that their children enjoy school and are safe. They are unanimous that the school is well led and managed. A very small minority had different concerns which were investigated but the inspector could find 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 Forest of Teesdale 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 inspector received 9 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 15 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	6	67	3	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	8	89	1	11	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	67	3	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	67	2	22	1	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	7	78	1	11	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	67	2	22	1	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	89	1	11	0	0	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	78	1	11	1	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	67	2	22	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	78	2	22	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	67	3	33	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	89	1	11	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	5	56	1	11	0	0	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.



4 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Forest of Teesdale Primary School, Barnard Castle DL12 0HA

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when I visited your school recently. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with you and hearing what you had to say about your school. You told me that Forest is a good school and I agree with you. Here are some of the things I liked about your school:

- you are very friendly, polite and helpful to visitors and each other
- you enjoy coming to school, are keen to learn and your behaviour is excellent
- you make good progress over your time in school to reach average standards
- adults look after you exceptionally well and make sure you are safe
- teaching is good and your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and exciting
- the school is well led and managed
- you show a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and how to stay safe
- you contribute a great deal to the life of the school and your local community
- you know a lot about life in other parts of the world as well as other parts of Great Britain
- 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 you are all given lots of opportunities to write to help you improve your writing skills
- that your teachers continue to make learning exciting for you, by linking different subjects, and also to help you to learn a modern foreign language
- for the Reception children to have more things to do and play with outside and for adults to make notes about what the children can do or find difficult.

I know that you are very proud of your school and will do your best to help your headteacher and teachers make your school even better.

Very best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Mrs Christine Millett

Lead inspector

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