

Gurney Pease Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114172
Local Authority	Darlington
Inspection number	338309
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Gordon Potter

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	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr Ian Grieves
Headteacher	Mrs Sandra Battensby
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 24 lessons taught by nine teachers, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies and documentation, pupils' work, assessment data, monitoring records and strategic planning. They also scrutinised 79 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- the effectiveness of strategies to raise attainment, especially in English and for the most able pupils
- whether teaching is strong enough, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to allow children and pupils to make good progress from their starting points when they join the school
- the effectiveness of strategies to improve attendance.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average size school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Most pupils are from White British heritage backgrounds. A very small minority of pupils do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The school experiences high pupil turnover. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools, Artsmark Gold and International awards.

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

In this good school, pupils behave well, are eager to learn and have an outstanding understanding of how to stay healthy. All staff provide sensitive care and support which ensure that pupils' well-being and personal development are promoted well. As a result, pupils are happy and feel safe. They make good progress because effective teaching generally makes it clear to pupils what they will learn and guides them through step-by-step learning. The curriculum is good overall. It is strongly focused on developing pupils' skills in English and mathematics and is increasingly based on topics which reflect pupils' interests. While there are many exciting enrichment activities, there are too few opportunities for pupils to investigate together, to solve problems or to apply their skills. Occasionally, some activities are not effectively planned and pupils can become confused. The school uses information about pupils' skills and abilities well to target and to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or are at risk of falling behind. However, data are not sufficiently well used to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged often enough. There are good partnerships with outside agencies and effective strategies to involve parents and carers in their children's learning. As a result, parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and how it nurtures pupils' social, moral and academic development. Although attendance is low, the school has made strenuous and successful attempts to improve it. As a result, current data show a marked improvement for this school year, especially for those pupils whose attendance has been weak.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average in all subjects. However, the percentage of pupils who achieve the higher Level 5 has been well below average. Initiatives to improve pupils' writing are beginning to raise standards in English. All groups of pupils now make good progress from their starting points, which are significantly below those expected for their age overall.

The experienced headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team, has a very clear understanding of the diverse and changing needs of the school and its pupils. Clear sighted self-evaluation ensures that initiatives are regularly reviewed and refined. This has led to improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage, a more stimulating curriculum and improvements to writing, which have begun to raise attainment. Improvements in provision and outcomes for pupils indicate that the school's capacity to improve is good, and that it provides good value for money. Pupils have a strong influence on what happens in school. They have a good understanding of their own and other faiths and cultures, of life in other countries and of the multi-cultural make-up of society in the United Kingdom.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By 2011, raise attainment, especially for the most able, by ensuring that:
 - pupils have more opportunities to investigate together, to solve problems and to apply their skills across a range of subjects
 - all activities in lessons are clearly focused on learning intentions so that pupils are always clear about what they are to do
 - teachers use data more effectively so that work is well matched to the needs of the most able pupils.
- Further improve attendance by taking firm action with parents and carers where necessary.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are polite, have good attitudes, form good relationships and are keen to do well in their work. They achieve well and clearly enjoy their learning, achieving well in sport, the humanities and art. They especially enjoy challenging and lively activities, such as using information and communication technology (ICT) to write poems using onomatopoeia or seeking treasure to stimulate their writing about pirates.

From starting points in Year 1 which, overall, are well below national expectations, pupils attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Recent improvements to the curriculum and in teaching mean that pupils in Key Stage 1 now make good progress. Progress is stronger in Years 5 and 6 as teachers build on the slowly but securely developed foundations of basic skills laid down in earlier years. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported and make good progress. The more able pupils could sometimes be challenged more.

Pupils are extremely aware of the importance of a healthy diet and of taking plenty of exercise. This is reflected in their keen involvement in physical education and the high take-up of healthy school meals. They care for one another well, have great respect for each other and for the adults in the school, and say they feel safe. Pupils are confident that they know exactly what to do in the event of a concern.

Pupils willingly take on roles as playground buddies and eco-monitors. They make a positive contribution to the school community through the school council. This has effectively suggested improvements to playground equipment and children's toilets and made a very strong contribution to the school's achievement of the Healthy Schools Award. Pupils support a range of charities and participate in competitions, activities with the local churches and developments in the environment. Despite a range of activities which encourage pupils to plan together to raise funds, pupils are no better than satisfactorily prepared for their future economic well-being because overall attendance is low, their skills in ICT and working collaboratively are developing rather than secure, and they have average basic skills in English and mathematics.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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	1
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are thoughtfully planned so that pupils are given opportunities to learn through practical activities, including games, drama and using ICT. Teachers usually make it clear to pupils what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded, although occasionally the activities can be confusing. They use questions well to ascertain what pupils already know and to check that pupils have made progress. Marking is done well so that pupils are clear about what they have achieved and know what they have to do to improve further. Teachers use interactive whiteboard technology well to engage pupils and to stimulate their thinking, for example, when a teacher uses a virtual compass to reinforce pupils' understanding of direction. Teachers and teaching assistants are effective at supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. While there are some opportunities for pupils to talk together to share their ideas about writing stories, there are too few lessons where pupils are encouraged to solve problems, apply their skills and to develop their own thinking. The curriculum contributes to good achievement by offering pupils a range of interesting activities, including regular use of ICT, which are increasingly based on pupils' own interests. This thematic approach is beginning to help pupils to see the links between subjects and to offer them opportunities to write about a range of topics. Special programmes to help particular groups or individual pupils are well planned and targeted, and effectively contribute to the good progress pupils make. For example, additional

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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teaching of letter sounds for specific pupils is helping to improve their writing and there are good procedures to encourage reading. Well planned enrichment activities, including a residential visit to Robinwood outdoor centre, enable pupils to develop their artistic skills and learn about life in other countries and the world of work. There are many popular extra-curricular clubs which help pupils develop their skills in sporting, scientific and drama activities.

The school is highly effective at welcoming and integrating the large number of pupils from a range of backgrounds who join the school during the course of the school year. There is very effective provision for those pupils who do not speak English as their first language. The school informs parents and carers regularly about pupils' progress and helps them to support learning at home through family learning sessions. Good procedures as pupils move through school and effective partnerships with local secondary schools ensure that pupils are prepared well for the next phase of their education.

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?

School leaders work as a cohesive team and have a clear view of what needs to be done to make the school even better. Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum have already brought about an increase in the rates at which pupils make progress. There are detailed and appropriate priorities to effect further improvements in writing and standards. The school knows itself well and plans for improvement are clearly delineated in the school development plan which is monitored regularly and to which all staff and governors contribute. There is a well organised programme of continuing professional development which uses the skills of staff in school, visits to other schools and the expertise within the local authority to advance school improvement. The school is proud of its inclusive nature and has close links with outside agencies to support the individual needs of pupils, including strategies to improve attendance. There is a clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities, tackling stereotypes and ensuring that discrimination against any group is avoided. Governors offer strong support and clear challenge to the school and have well-developed strategies to monitor its work. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements and there are good procedures to ensure their safety. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Pupils learn about life in

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different faiths and cultures because the school actively celebrates the developing diversity of its population.

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
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	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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Despite a range of ability, children's skills on entry to nursery are significantly below those expected for their age overall. Effective and improving teaching helps children now to make good progress but because of their diverse learning needs, their skills remain below average as they enter Year 1. Particular weaknesses remain in their creative development and in writing and reading. Children feel safe, are happy and settled, and behave well. They enjoy activities in all areas of learning, experimenting with musical instruments, tasting new foods, playing sports and working with visitors on woodland crafts. However, some activities are not clearly enough related to learning goals and adults do not always interact effectively enough with children's learning. A range of healthy snacks and drinking water, opportunities for exercise and encouraging children to wash their hands, help them to develop a good understanding of how to stay healthy. Staff ensure that requirements regarding children's safety are met. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has a clear understanding of how children learn. There is much useful information about children and their progress, and observations and assessments are increasingly well used to inform their day-to-day planning. There is a strong team ethos amongst the adults, including those from outside agencies, who sensitively support children with a wide range of diverse needs. There are developing partnerships with parents and carers, for example, learning diaries are helpful in

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showing parents and carers how to help their children at home. Good procedures enable children to settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes, and there are good arrangements for transition into Year 1.

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

Views of parents and carers

A minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The respondents support the school strongly. Most like the way the school helps pupils to feel safe, stay healthy and enjoy their learning. Parents and carers are supportive of the quality of teaching and the way the school meets their child's needs. The inspection agrees that these are positive features of the school. However, a very small minority of parents and carers indicated that they believed the school could be better led and managed, that the school could inform them better about their children's progress, that behaviour could be better managed and that the school could help them support their children's learning more. Inspectors do not consider that these are areas for improvement. A few parents and carers also expressed the view that some parents set a bad example to children at the school gate.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Gurney Pease 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 79 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 172 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	58	29	37	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	47	33	42	9	11	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	46	33	42	10	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	52	31	39	6	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	52	32	41	6	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	49	28	35	11	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	52	31	39	7	9	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)	31	39	40	51	6	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	43	37	47	6	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	43	30	38	10	13	4	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	39	32	41	8	10	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	37	47	33	42	7	9	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	54	25	32	9	11	1	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



28 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gurney Pease Primary School, Darlington, DL1 2NG

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you so much for making us welcome when we inspected your school.

You go to a good school. Teachers help you learn well and tell you clearly how to improve your work. They also know what to do to make the school even better. The team was impressed by the pride you take in your work and how hard you work in lessons. You behave well, show respect for one another and look after one another admirably. You are very polite and helpful and we enjoyed talking to you about your school. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers and appreciate the activities the school provides for you, such as visits and clubs. Most of your parents and carers like the school very much. Your teachers try hard to make your lessons fun and all staff care for you extremely well.

I have asked your teachers to do the following things to help your school to improve even more:

- help you to reach higher standards at the end of Year 6
- develop the curriculum further so that you know clearly what to do in lessons, have more chances to investigate together, solve problems and to apply your skills
- help you to improve your attendance.

You can help by continuing to do your best and attending regularly. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Potter

Lead inspector

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