

Sugar Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114207
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338313
Inspection dates	20–21 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	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lyn Swift
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Cumming
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 35 lessons taught by 13 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 111 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as questionnaires from staff.

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

- the quality of teaching, to ensure that it is strong enough to enable pupils to make at least satisfactory progress and to overcome a legacy of underachievement
- the effectiveness of strategies to raise attainment, especially in English and for the most able pupils
- pupils' understanding of life in other countries and the multicultural make-up of society in the United Kingdom.

Information about the school

This is a much larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The largest majority of pupils are from White British heritage backgrounds. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and of those with a statement of special educational needs are above average. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools, Artsmark and Activemark awards. The headteacher has been in post since January 2008.

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 and are very keen to learn. They make good progress because effective teaching makes learning fun and engages pupils in a range of interesting activities. 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, feel safe and know how to stay healthy. 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. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to investigate together, to solve problems and to apply their skills. The school has much useful data about pupils' skills and abilities and employs it well to ensure that pupils know at what level they are working, and to plan work to challenge pupils at all levels. This applies also in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where good teaching and planning ensure that activities are well matched to learning goals. The school is justly proud of its inclusive nature and its well-established place at the heart of the community. There are good partnerships with outside agencies. The school has introduced effective programmes that have significantly improved attendance, which is now above average, and involve parents and carers more in their children's learning. As a result parents and carers are highly supportive of the school and how it supports pupils' social, moral and academic development.

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 below average, especially in English. Initiatives to improve pupils' writing have raised standards in English and mean that all groups of pupils, including the most able, now make good progress from their starting points. There are effective procedures to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team and a recently constituted team of middle leaders, has revitalised the school after a period when standards declined. Their clear-sighted self-evaluation has meant that initiatives, including a more stimulating curriculum and more effective assessment strategies, have begun to raise attainment. Given the good quality of provision and good outcomes for pupils, this further ensures that the school's capacity to improve is good, and it provides good value for money. Pupils have a strong influence on what happens in school and a good understanding of their own culture and of other faiths. However, their understanding of life in other countries and of the multicultural make-up of society in the United Kingdom is less well developed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- By 2011, raise pupils' attainment by ensuring that they have more opportunities to investigate together, to solve problems and to apply their skills across a range of subjects.
- Develop pupils' better understanding of life in other countries and of the multicultural make-up of society in the United Kingdom.

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

Pupils are courteous, have good attitudes, form positive relationships and show great keenness to do well in their work. They achieve well and clearly enjoy their learning. They achieve particularly well in the humanities and sport. They especially enjoy challenging and lively activities, such as using interactive whiteboard technology to discuss the plight of stranded travellers or to investigate volume.

From starting points in Year 1 which, overall, are below national expectations, pupils attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Historically, pupils have made good progress in Key Stage 1, where attainment is typically broadly average at the end of Year 2. Recent improvements to the curriculum and in teaching mean that pupils in Key Stage 2 now make good progress. However, older pupils have not, as yet, had time to sufficiently overcome a legacy of underachievement in order to raise their attainment significantly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported and make good progress.

Pupils are very 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 sports leaders, peer mediators and librarians. They make a positive contribution to the school community through the school council. This meets weekly and manages its own budget to fund playground equipment. Pupils support a range of charities and participate in competitions, activities with the local churches and contribute to the local newspaper. Despite above average attendance, pupils are equipped no better than satisfactorily for their future economic well-being because their skills in information and communication technology 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

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

How effective is the provision?

Pupils enjoy their lessons and learn quickly because they are set tasks that are challenging yet achievable, and given the confidence to tackle their work through well-targeted praise. Teachers use new technology and interactive whiteboards well and pupils respond enthusiastically to their use. They make it clear to pupils what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded, and check regularly that pupils are making progress. Teachers use questions well to ascertain what pupils already know and to encourage them to expand their answers. However, there are too few lessons where pupils are encouraged to solve problems, apply their skills and to develop their own thinking. Teachers assess pupils' work carefully and use the information well to plan future work. Good marking helps pupils understand the next small steps needed to improve their work and, as a result, their progress is accelerated.

The curriculum contributes to good achievement by offering pupils a range of interesting activities, including more regular use of information and communication technology, 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 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 enable pupils to meet artists and writers, and they include opportunities to learn about work and enterprise activities. The recent residential visit by Year 6 pupils to France enabled them to experience life in a

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different country and to expand their understanding of the First World War. There are many popular extra-curricular clubs which help pupils develop their skills in sporting, constructional and environmental activities, especially the development of the school garden.

Effective strategies, and the good work of the parent support advisor, fully involve parents and carers in supporting their children's learning and much improved attendance. 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?

The headteacher has determinedly, rigorously and skilfully pursued and implemented strategies that have brought about an improvement in school effectiveness. She has established an able senior leadership team and a team of middle leaders whose successful focus, through a well organised programme of continuing professional development, has been to improve teaching, the curriculum and the use of data to support learning. These clear priorities have been achieved alongside the eradication of a deficit budget and the refurbishment of the fabric of the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school knows itself well and plans for improvement are comprehensively outlined in the school development plan, which is monitored regularly and to which all staff and governors contribute. This has raised staff morale. Teachers relish their role in raising attainment and value their increased responsibility, accountability and the opportunity to contribute to the development of the school. Governors offer satisfactory challenge and their considered support has been helpful to the leadership team. The school is proud of its inclusive nature and has close links with outside agencies to support pupils who have a range of complex needs. This demonstrates well the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities, tackling stereotypes and ensuring that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times. The school's good relationship with parents and carers benefits pupils' well-being and learning. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements and there are good procedures to ensure their safety. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. It is very clear about its place at the heart of the local community but its role in helping pupils realise their place as global

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citizens or as members of a culturally diverse society, is less well developed.

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	3
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

Despite a wide range of ability, overall, children's skills on entry to Nursery are significantly below those expected for their age. Effective teaching helps children to make good progress but because of their diverse learning needs they remain below average as they enter Year 1. Particular weaknesses remain in their creative development, knowledge and understanding of the world, in their awareness of shape and space and in writing. Children feel safe, are confident, happy and settled and enjoy activities in all areas of learning. They particularly enjoy experimenting with water cascades to investigate forces, floating and sinking. They share their toys, work together happily and behave well. The school provides an attractive, well set out and vibrant learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, in which children flourish. A range of healthy snacks and drinking water and many opportunities for exercise help children 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 and the very skilful teachers in the Reception classes, have an extremely clear understanding of how children learn. There is much useful information about children and their progress, and observations and assessments are very well used to inform their day-to-day planning. There is a strong team ethos amongst the many adults who skilfully and sensitively support children with a wide range of diverse needs. There are highly effective partnerships with parents and carers that enable children to settle

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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 small minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The respondents support the school very strongly. Almost all like the way the school helps pupils to feel safe, stay healthy and enjoy their learning. Parents and carers are strongly supportive of the quality of teaching and the way the school informs them about their children's progress. 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 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.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sugar Hill 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 111 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 415 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	46	59	53	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	57	51	50	45	4	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	53	48	57	51	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	41	53	48	10	9	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	50	45	53	48	7	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	39	56	50	11	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	34	68	61	2	2	1	1
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)	34	31	67	60	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	32	66	59	9	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	33	58	52	13	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	32	58	52	12	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	45	41	53	48	13	12	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	42	53	48	6	5	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

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.



24 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sugar Hill Primary School, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 5NU

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 very well, show great 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, including your garden. 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 have more chances to investigate together, solve problems and to apply your skills
- help you to learn more about life in other countries and about the people from different cultures who live in the United Kingdom.

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

Yours sincerely

Mr Gordon Potter

Lead inspector

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