

Amble First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122174
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340097
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sheila Little
Headteacher	Mrs Joyce Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed five teachers and 11 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and analysed 37 questionnaires from parents and carers, 57 from pupils and 15 from staff. The team also looked at: documents and policies, including those relating to the safeguarding of pupils; the data the school has collected about the pupils' progress; and the school's records of its monitoring of the quality of teaching.

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

- current attainment and progress, particularly in mathematics in Years 3 and 4
- how effectively teachers use assessment information to help pupils improve their work and involve them in assessing their own learning
- the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation of leaders at all levels to identify and address any underachievement.

Information about the school

Amble First school is smaller than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average. Almost all pupils are White British and have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who have a statement of special educational needs, is above average. There is Early Years Foundation Stage provision in one Reception class. The school has many awards, including Artsmark Gold, the Healthy Schools award and the International School award for the promotion of global awareness. There have been significant changes in staffing in the past two years.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Amble First School provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education in an outstandingly caring and supportive environment with excellent safeguarding procedures. This results in pupils feeling extremely safe and secure at school. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school and the views of many are captured by the following comments: 'The school is friendly and welcoming. There seems to be a real caring, nurturing attitude.' and 'We feel that the school is a very forward looking one and that all staff, pupils, governors and those associated with the school are working well together to improve outcomes for all of the children.'

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory during their time in school. Standards, following a decline in recent years, are improving and are now in line with those seen nationally at the end of Year 4. This represents satisfactory progress in the light of the typically-as-expected level of skills on entry to the Reception class. Progress in mathematics, and in Years 3 and 4 in particular, has seen significant improvement. Pupils do equally well, regardless of their background or ability. Pupils receive excellent care, support and guidance, particularly the most vulnerable pupils. This allows them to be fully involved in all aspects of the school.

Throughout the school, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have good relationships with teachers, behave well and work well together in class. The curriculum is good and tailored well to the needs of all pupils. It is enhanced by many visits and visitors. However at present, writing is not incorporated into enough activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although in many lessons it is good. In some lessons the pace of learning is too slow because pupils do not get involved in independent activities soon enough. Sometimes the focus of learning is not always in clear measurable steps, making it difficult to check. In addition, pupils are not always given clear enough guidance to be able to say whether they are learning well. As a result attainment is not as high as it could be, nor is progress as fast as it might be.

The headteacher has brought about a drive and determination in all staff to secure improvement, including in the rate of attendance and improving the rate of pupil progress. The school knows its strengths and areas for development and has many strategies in place to bring about improvement. Some are already having the desired effect, such as in raising standards in mathematics for the older pupils. However, at present there is not enough involvement of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluation or a sharp enough focus on learning in lesson observations, resulting in improvements in teaching not occurring fast enough. The school recognises this and is in the process of refining procedures in these areas. The capacity for the school to improve further is

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satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment and accelerate progress through ensuring that all teaching is at least good or better by:
 - increasing the pace of learning with pupils getting involved in independent learning as early as possible in lessons
 - making sure the focus of learning is in clear measurable 'chunks' so that the learning of individual pupils can be checked more easily throughout the lesson
 - giving clear guidance to pupils so they can they can always tell if they are doing 'a good job'
 - ensuring that lesson observations have a close focus on the learning of pupils
 - involving subject leaders in the monitoring of lessons in their areas of responsibility
 - giving more opportunities for writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Inspection evidence from lessons confirms that the learning of pupils of all ages and abilities is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. For example, in a Year 1 lesson in mathematics, groups of pupils made good progress, being fully engaged in independent tasks well matched to their abilities. However, in some lessons, such as a science lesson for the older pupils, not enough made good progress as they were held too long as a whole-class group with not enough opportunity to get involved in learning independently. Previous underperformance of some groups, including that of girls and some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved, so that differences in the progress of different groups of pupils are now minimal.

Pupils' behaviour is good and makes a strong contribution to learning, particularly when they work together. The pupils' questionnaire confirmed that all felt extremely safe and there were many comments, such as, 'I feel very safe in my school because people keep me safe.' Pupils enjoy being at school and the parents and carers strongly agree. The school community is very harmonious and pupils are respectful towards each other and staff. They have a good understanding of what it means to be healthy and many participate in the wide range of sporting clubs. They also enjoy the physical routines in lessons such as Kung Fu punctuation that help them to settle and concentrate well. They are proud of the extensive displays of their work and of the links they have with schools in Kenya and Ghana and they talk of the importance of helping others. They are well prepared for their future with above average attendance and sound basic skills,

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including good skills in information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils say that there is nothing that they would want to change about their school, describing it as, 'Good, because you learn a lot.' and 'Nice, because it's friendly and you gets lots of fresh air.'

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

Lessons are usually well planned and organised so that pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace and the tasks the teachers set are usually modified well for the range of abilities, but in some lessons it is too long before pupils get fully involved in individual work. Teaching assistants provide good support that enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to have full access to lessons and activities. Teachers usually discuss with pupils what it is they should be learning, but sometimes this is not clear or detailed enough and, as a result, it is difficult to assess how well learning has taken place. In addition, the learning of individual pupils is not checked often enough during the lesson to help them improve and accelerate their progress. There are, however, many examples of effective marking where pupils'

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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progress has benefited and their work has improved.

The curriculum has been reorganised recently and there are more links between subjects and a deeper enrichment through visits to places of interest, events at school and a wider range of clubs. For example, a residential visit helps pupils to gain in confidence and be considerate of others. In addition, Year 2 pupils were seen contributing very well in a philosophy lesson where the extremely supportive environment meant they were able to share their feelings well. There is good integration of literacy and ICT into many topics. Art plays a key role and standards there are well above average, resulting in the award of Artsmark Gold. Pupils have the opportunity to learn Spanish, French and German and many opportunities to learn about other cultures. These opportunities contribute well to the pupils' good personal development, but it is too soon to see their full effect on the pupils' academic achievement.

Care, guidance and support are excellent and parents, carers and pupils appreciate the 'extra mile' that the school goes for its pupils. The most vulnerable pupils are particularly well supported through very effective links with external agencies. Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive carefully tailored support that allows them to benefit from lessons in mainstream classes, as well as personalised one-to-one tuition, and play a full part in all aspects of the life of the school. The school has worked successfully with parents and carers and the community to reduce the number of persistent and holiday absences. Behaviour is very well managed and positive attitudes are strongly encouraged.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has managed changes in staffing well and has brought together a committed group of staff with a shared vision and ambition to improve the school. The results of the staff questionnaire were extremely positive and showed that all staff feel very valued. 'Fantastic teamwork – I wouldn't want to work anywhere else.' from one member of staff, exemplifies this attitude well. Although some of the subject leaders are not long in post their efforts are already having an impact on the rate in progress. However, at present their role does not extend to monitoring lessons. There are effective systems for school self-evaluation. Quick action leads to strategies to address underachievement. For example, the focus on mathematics in Years 3 and 4 over the past year has had a marked effect in raising standards. Currently, all groups of pupils

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make satisfactory and improving progress, reflecting good equality of opportunity.

Increasingly, data is being used well to inform lesson planning and assessments are becoming more accurate. Governors know the school well and what it needs to do to improve. They act as critical friends effectively, but they are not sufficiently involved in evaluating their own performance and that of the school. Safeguarding procedures are excellent, with clear policies and secure risk-assessment systems. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and value greatly the workshops to help them aid their children more effectively. Community cohesion is good, particularly so within school, locally and internationally. There is a wide range of effective partnerships, including close links with a local special school. The school achieves satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a sound start in the Reception class. They settle in quickly and are keen to learn. Children play together well and are well behaved. They enjoy their learning. Most children join with the expected skills for their age, but a significant minority have less well-developed language and literary skills. Overall they make satisfactory progress and at the end of Reception reach the levels expected for their age in most areas of learning, although their levels of attainment remain below what is expected in communication, language and literacy. Children were seen enjoying a 'rocket launch' session at the beginning of the day where they practised linking sounds to letters. However, at present there is not a strong enough focus on writing to

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complement other activities.

Adults provide well for children's welfare. There are well-established routines to promote their personal development, such as tidying up and hand washing. There is a good balance between activities chosen by children and those led by adults. Adults generally support children well and their explanations are clear. Adults have been successful in developing children's early skills by picking up on their interests and extending them. Children's physical development is good. The school makes good use of the outside space available and there are plans in place to develop this further. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Adults regularly assess what the children know, understand and can do. Help from the local authority has ensured that these assessments are now more accurate than previously. In addition, the progress of different groups of children is now being tracked and analysed.

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

About one third of the parents and carers returned the questionnaire. They were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work. Every single one who replied agreed that the school kept their children safe and that their children enjoyed school, both features very clear to the inspectors. All felt that the school helps them to support their child's learning. This was something that the inspectors felt the school was doing increasingly well through its parent workshops. There were no significant concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Amble First 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 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 130 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	74	11	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	70	13	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	67	14	33	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	60	15	35	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	30	70	13	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	72	12	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	58	18	42	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)	24	56	17	40	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	65	14	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	51	20	47	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	51	19	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	56	17	40	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	34	79	8	19	1	2	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.



18 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Amble First School, Morpeth, NE65 0EF

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors to your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing you learn in class. We worked very closely with your headteacher and also spent time talking to your teachers and governors and looking at your work.

Yours is a school that is getting better. You develop well and achieve satisfactory results in your work. It is a very happy environment where most of you behave very well and enjoy being there. You told us that you like the school just as it is and that you would not want anything to change. You also told us that you feel extremely safe in school and that the adults in school care about you a great deal. We agree with you that they look after you particularly well. Your parents and carers told us that they are very happy with all aspects of the school and that they appreciate the help that the school gives them to help you with your learning. Your headteacher, teachers and governors work together well as a team to keep improving the school. We have asked your headteacher to make the school even better by:

- asking teachers to get you working individually or in small groups sooner in lessons
- checking more often during lessons on how well you are doing
- making it clear to you what it is you should be able to do so that you can always tell if you are doing well
- making sure that when other adults are observing your lessons they look more closely at what you are learning
- giving more opportunities for writing in the Reception class.

You can help by telling your teacher if it is unclear to you if you are doing a good job with each of your activities.

We would like to wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Alison Thomson

Lead inspector

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