

# Bellingham First School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 122183            |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Northumberland    |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 340100            |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 13 October 2009   |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Margaret Shepherd |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|--|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Foundation  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 5–9   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 45  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                                      |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Mr Dave Allen   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Mr Martin Bell (acting HT)                              |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | Not previously inspected                                |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Redesmouth Road<br>Hexham<br>Northumberland<br>NE48 2EL |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01434 220230  |
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited seven lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, a senior staff member of the neighbouring middle school and groups of pupils. She observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including policies, school improvements plans, minutes of governors' meetings, the school's monitoring records and analyses of pupils' attainment and progress. The inspector analysed 24 questionnaires returned by parents.

- the impact of teaching and the curriculum on attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- the quality of the school's self-evaluation processes, the impact of changes in staffing and leadership and the small size of the school on its capacity to improve
- the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision and children's progress
- the pupils' contributions to the community and how the school is responding to community cohesion requirements.

## Information about the school

This is a much smaller school than average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The number of pupils in each year group varies considerably, and in some is very small. The school provides for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class, with a very small number of children. There is a mixed Year 1 and 2 class and a mixed Year 3 and 4 class. In two classes there are job share arrangements.

The school is on the same site as the middle school its pupils transfer to. It shares facilities and some senior staffing arrangements with it. Bellingham First School currently has an acting headteacher, who was a teacher in the middle school. The permanent headteacher is on maternity leave. Since the last inspection the school has had several staff changes. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark.

There is an independent childcare facility based on the site. It is inspected separately and receives a separate report, which is available on the Ofsted website.

**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

This is a satisfactory school. The acting headteacher is working effectively in his new role with staff and governors to analyse strengths and weaknesses and to improve provision. The close links with the middle school are supporting the school well during this transition. Self-evaluation processes are satisfactory. The school improvement plan has clear targets and staff show a willingness to work to ensure they are met. Despite staff changes the school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection and is demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

Pupils achieve satisfactorily. By the end of Years 2 and 4, pupils' attainment is average overall and this represents satisfactory progress over time as children enter the school at the levels expected for their age. There is some variation in standards from year to year due to the small numbers in each year group but progress is consistently satisfactory. Standards are highest in reading throughout the school. This is due to the higher profile it receives, the regular individual support that pupils receive from adults and the positive attitudes that the school engenders in pupils towards reading. Attainment and progress are not as good in writing as in reading or mathematics and handwriting is particularly weak. The writing curriculum does not ensure that pupils build systematically across different skills and the systems for assessing their progress in writing are not effective enough. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well in lessons. They introduce the focus of the lesson clearly, but the pace of learning is not always fast enough, with too long being spent in whole-class sessions. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate as is the progress children make in their academic development. Work is not matched closely enough to different children's needs, the curriculum is not stimulating enough either indoors or outside and opportunities for independent learning are missed. Reception staff support children's welfare effectively, however, and most of the outcomes for children's personal development are satisfactory.

Staff use the advantages of the school's small size well to support pupils' personal development. Behaviour is good, with older pupils keen to support younger children. Pupils are confident that they can go to an adult if they have any concerns. Pupils' contributions to the community are satisfactory. They value their school community and the links that they have with the village, but are less aware of communities regionally or further afield. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance levels are higher than average. They have a good understanding of keeping healthy and try hard to carry it out in practice. The school has effective arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

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- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage and children's progress by:
  - assessing children's attainment efficiently and using this information to provide learning tasks that match their different needs
  - providing a stimulating and balanced curriculum across all the areas of learning both indoors and outdoors
  - organising a better balance between adult-led and independent learning
  - monitoring provision and providing appropriate professional development for staff.
- Raise attainment and increase progress in writing by:
  - providing a curriculum that builds more systematically over time on the different skills of writing, particularly handwriting
  - providing more opportunities for extended writing
  - improving the quality of assessment of writing skills and providing more specific targets for pupils, which are also communicated to parents
  - monitoring pupils' progress in writing over time so that earlier action can be taken to ensure pupils are on track to make good progress.
- Improve community cohesion by:
  - analysing the audit of current provision and providing more consistent opportunities for development
  - providing more effective coverage of regional and global dimensions
  - ensuring a greater focus on promoting it beyond the school's immediate locality
  - giving pupils more opportunities to mix with people from minority ethnic groups other than their own.
- 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**

Pupils respond well in lessons to the opportunities for reading. They listen well to stories because teachers choose interesting texts and read them with expression. Older pupils show confidence in more complex reading skills, such as interpreting dialogue and characterisation in their reading books. Throughout the school, pupils thoroughly enjoy their individual time with adults in tackling new texts and discussing the stories. In contrast, pupils' progress is slower in writing. They are not so keen to write and are not as confident in basic skills of handwriting and grammar. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equal progress to the rest of the class in group work because they receive well-focused support. In the best lessons these pupils make good progress in whole-class sessions because the teacher matches their needs well, but in

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other lessons opportunities are missed for teaching assistants to support them. Pupils feel safe and are confident that they could go to any adult if they needed help. Behaviour is good, both in classrooms and around the school. Older pupils are very sensitive to younger children and are proud that they need to set an example for the rest of the school. Contributions to the community are satisfactory. There are some good examples of pupils taking responsibility, such as communicating with the canteen to report numbers for dinners, but the school council is not seen as a key way of making their views known or impacting on school provision. There are some effective links with the village community, that pupils appreciate, but they do not have enough understanding of communities wider afield or globally. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, as is pupils' preparation for their future lives.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>   | 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        |
| <b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>Pupils' behaviour</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>   | 2        |
| <b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>  | <b>3</b> |

**How effective is the provision?**

Teachers introduce lessons well and explain clearly to pupils what they want them to learn. They often use interactive whiteboards well to engage pupils' interest and to illustrate points they are making which provides good support for their learning. For

<sup>1</sup> 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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example, pupils enjoy watching the screen to see if their answers are right. Sometimes, however, the whole-class sessions go on for too long. This causes pupils to lose concentration and it reduces the time for pupils to consolidate their understanding through independent or group work. Teaching assistants work well with small groups. They have a good understanding of individual needs. This support is valuable for the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are sometimes given good opportunities to develop their ideas and views by talking with a partner and when this occurs their understanding is effectively reinforced. This is not a feature of all lessons, however. The quality and use of assessment is variable. It is effective in reading, but is not well developed in writing, although some better practice is being developed through a pilot project in Year 4. The use of assessment information to provide pupils with specific targets in writing and detailed feedback on how to reach them is a weakness.

The curriculum for reading is of good quality, with a good balance between developing skills and enjoying the content of texts. This is in contrast to the writing curriculum, which does not ensure the systematic development of skills or enough opportunities for pupils to write at length. Handwriting is a particular weakness and pupils do not develop a regular joined up style. The school provides an appropriate balance across different subjects. It makes good use of the expertise of the middle school to provide specialist support in physical education and French. The partnership between other first schools in the area is supporting the school effectively in developing its curriculum. There is a good range of visits that enrich the curriculum well, particularly in the village.

Staff use the small size of the school to advantage in caring and supporting pupils, with all adults knowing individuals from other classes well. The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures is satisfactory. While parents are kept informed of their children's well-being, they do not receive enough information about academic progress or their child's current targets for improvement. Although staff are producing guidance for parents to support their children's learning in reading, opportunities are missed in providing guidance in other areas of the curriculum. A key strength in the care of pupils is the strong partnership between the child care, middle school and outside agencies for child protection.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The quality of teaching</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The use of assessment to support learning  | 3        |
| <b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>   | <b>3</b> |

**How effective are leadership and management?**

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The acting headteacher has made a good start to leading and managing the school. He has a clear vision of how the school needs to improve and is ensuring that staff and governors share their knowledge and expertise to produce clear documentation for school improvement planning. He is aware of the deficiencies in the Early Years Foundation Stage and is starting to plan action to improve provision. The school promotes equality of opportunity effectively as well as tackling discrimination. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. There are some experienced governors with appropriate expertise, but others, while enthusiastic, are new in post. Roles and responsibilities are currently being clarified and extended. The school is in the early stages of promoting community cohesion, with regional and global dimensions being the weakest elements. Leaders are working well in partnership with the middle school to share responsibilities and use each other's expertise. This supports pupils' transition between the schools well.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning   | 3        |
| <b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>  | <b>3</b> |

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children enter the Reception class with skills that are in line with expectations for their age. They make inconsistent progress in the different areas of learning because there is not an appropriate balance across the curriculum. There are particular weaknesses in language, writing and calculations. Although staff assess some of the children's attainment, the recording systems are not efficient enough and are not used as a basis for providing varying learning tasks that match different individual's needs. The range of activities both indoors and outdoors are not stimulating and not enough time is spent in



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the outdoor learning area. Sessions are not organised well enough to provide a balance between adult-led and independent activities. Most elements of personal development are satisfactory, with children playing harmoniously together and behaving well. Staff take care to look after children's welfare and ensure that they are confident when they are with older pupils around the school. Leaders do not monitor provision well enough and staff do not have enough professional development to ensure that they understand the requirements and practice for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>                   | <b>4</b> |
| Taking into account:   |          |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage                          | 4        |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage                       | 4        |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 4        |

### **Views of parents and carers**

The majority of parents are positive about the work of the school. Several identify how well the acting headteacher is carrying out his new role. Parents appreciate that their children enjoy school and that they are kept safe. Concerns of parents include not enough information about their children's progress or guidance of how to support learning at home. The inspection confirms that these are areas for improvement. Some parents are worried about the ongoing staff changes, but others feel that staff are very supportive.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bellingham 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 inspection team received 24 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 45 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements  | Strongly Agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |    | Strongly disagree |   |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
|   | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | %  | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school  | 19             | 79 | 5     | 21 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe  | 17             | 71 | 7     | 29 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress   | 9              | 38 | 11    | 46 | 4        | 17 | 0                 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school   | 12             | 50 | 10    | 42 | 2        | 8  | 0                 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school   | 12             | 50 | 11    | 46 | 1        | 4  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning  | 9              | 38 | 12    | 50 | 3        | 13 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle   | 13             | 54 | 10    | 42 | 1        | 4  | 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) | 13             | 54 | 9     | 38 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs  | 12             | 50 | 11    | 46 | 1        | 4  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour  | 11             | 46 | 12    | 50 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns   | 10             | 42 | 12    | 50 | 0        | 0  | 0                 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively   | 13             | 54 | 9     | 38 | 1        | 4  | 0                 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school   | 13             | 54 | 8     | 33 | 2        | 8  | 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul> |
| 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.**



Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for the welcome that you gave me when I came to inspect your school. I really enjoyed talking to you all and you helped me to understand what you think about your learning.

Bellingham First School is a satisfactory school. Your new acting headteacher is working well with your staff and governors to help make your school a better place. The teaching you receive helps you make satisfactory progress as you move from Year 1 through the school, especially in reading. Children in Reception do not make enough progress because some of the activities are not as interesting as in other classes. You said that you thought behaviour was good and that the older pupils look after the younger ones well and I agree with you. You have some good links in your own village community and you try hard to keep healthy. Your staff work very well with the middle school and this helps to make your school a better place.

I have asked your acting headteacher, the staff and governors to do some things to make your school better. These are to make learning for the youngest children more effective, to help you all to make better progress in writing and to make better community links outside your village and in the wider world. I have also asked the school to check how well it does this more fully. You can help by continuing to come to school as regularly as you do, by working as hard as you can and to keep on helping each other around the school.

Yours sincerely

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