

Seahouses First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122214
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340106
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Shepherd

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	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev E Wood
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Ayden
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and a representative of outside agencies. They observed the school's work and looked at the school improvement plan, school policies and written procedures. They also looked at pupils' data and tracking systems, pupils' work, photographic evidence of creative activities and projects, records of school visits and visitors. The inspectors received and analysed 15 parental questionnaires.

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

- variations in standards over time and the reasons why writing standards are lower than reading standards
- whether contributions to the community, and healthy and safe living are the strongest features of pupils' personal development
- how leaders handle the challenges of managing a small school
- the impact of the staffing changes within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than average and serves the village of Seahouses and the surrounding area. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there is a small proportion of Polish pupils, who speak Polish as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The school is organised into a Reception class, which is sited in a separate building, a mixed Year 1 and 2 class and a mixed Year 3 and 4 class. This organisation has been in place since the beginning of term, reducing from three mixed-age classes in Key Stages 1 and 2 last year. There have been several staff changes over the past year.

The school has gained a number of awards, including the Artsmark Gold Award for the third time, Activemark, Healthy Schools Award and Investors in People. The school buildings now provide a large sports hall and changing facilities that is shared with the community. There is independent pre-school provision in purpose-built accommodation on the school site, which is not run by the governors and which is inspected separately. The school site also includes the village library.

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

Seahouses is a good school. The headteacher and governors work closely together to evaluate accurately the strengths and weaknesses of the school and then use this awareness in order to drive improvements forward. Leaders communicate well with the staff, who share their vision and are flexible in carrying out their different responsibilities. The school has worked systematically since the previous inspection to tackle the weaknesses identified. They have done this successfully, particularly in the case of increasing boys' achievement. All these features combine to give the school a good capacity for future improvement.

Children make satisfactory overall progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and good progress in reading. Progress accelerates in Key Stages 1 and 2 where achievement is good. Standards are above average by the end of Year 2, with reading standards being higher than the other subjects. This level of attainment is sustained in Key Stage 2, with reading reaching well above the expected level by the time pupils leave the school. This success is due to the many and varied strategies in place to promote reading. Standards in imaginative writing are also well above the expected level by the end of Year 4, but handwriting is a weakness through the school. Additionally, teachers' marking does not consistently give pupils enough guidance about how they can improve the technical aspects of their writing. The school analyses the needs of the Polish pupils and the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities carefully and ensures that they receive individual support to match provision to their needs. This results in these pupils making good progress as they move through the school.

All staff know each pupil very well because there is a strong ethos of caring and supporting individuals. This ensures that pupils feel happy and secure within school and enjoy their learning. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, with older pupils enjoying looking after the younger ones. The school has a strong belief in the importance of working within the village community. Staff are very successful in creating a wealth of opportunities for pupils to contribute to village life and for visitors to work in the school. This supports pupils' personal development very well. Teaching and learning are good in Key Stages 1 and 2, with staff handling the demands of mixed- age classes effectively. The curriculum is related well to pupils' different needs and interests, and the out-of-school activities and enrichment aspects of the curriculum are outstanding. The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children are fully involved in the enrichment activities and out-of-school clubs, but the quality of independent learning is not good enough and children do not spend nearly enough time in outdoor learning.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing more stimulating activities for independent learning across all the areas of learning both indoors and outdoors
 - using the outdoor learning area much more frequently.
- Reduce the gap in achievement between reading and writing standards by:
 - providing a more effective handwriting curriculum
 - ensuring that teachers' marking of pupils' work gives them more focussed guidance about how to improve the technical aspects of writing.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils make consistently good progress in lessons. They achieve well and enjoy responding to teachers' questions, concentrating well so that they can offer appropriate responses. In mathematics, they are confident to work out if they have made a mistake and are delighted when their answers are accurate. Speaking and listening skills are good because pupils respond well to opportunities for solving problems and working together to complete a piece of work. For example, in the Year 3/4 class pupils allocated roles for characters in one of their own stories and then performed it confidently, whilst being videoed. Pupils love reading, particularly when they have their individual time with an adult. They express their ideas imaginatively in writing, but are not as confident with the technical aspects of writing and their handwriting is untidy. Polish pupils play a full part in the learning with staff giving them great encouragement to contribute. Pupils with special educational needs respond very well to the additional support that they receive and are delighted when they can demonstrate their learning to the rest of the class.

Pupils have a good understanding of keeping healthy and the majority manage to put their knowledge into practice and to eat a healthy diet every day. Pupils have an outstanding commitment to exercise and take part enthusiastically in many different sporting activities. They feel very safe in school. Pupils are very courteous to each other and to adults. They appreciate the school's close links with local churches and their good spiritual development reflects this partnership. Pupils thoroughly enjoy many aspects of school life, such as, the opportunities to develop a good cultural understanding of their village and the locality. Pupils' good basic skills, their very positive attitudes towards reading and their regular opportunities to meet and work with adults from the locality prepare them well for their future lives.

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	2
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	1
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?

A key strength in the teaching includes the careful organisation of support staff and additional adults to support pupils across the different age groups. Teachers use questions skilfully in whole-class sessions, where they challenge more-able pupils and support slower learners. Teaching assistants lead group work confidently, resulting in good progress, but some opportunities are missed to supplement the teachers' questions for individuals during whole-class sessions. Teachers handle the interactive whiteboards skilfully and pupils' learning is accelerated through the careful selection of programs. For example, in the Year 1/2 class, pupils relished the chance to watch a poet read his own poems and this provided an excellent model to help them improve their own performance. Teachers use assessment well to feedback pupils' rate of learning. They are particularly good in setting individual targets, which results in pupils being clear about what they need to do over time to improve. Teachers' marking of pupils' writing is inconsistent and does not give pupils enough detail about how to improve their work in future.

A key curricular strength is in reading, owing to a strong home-school partnership, very regular individual support through a well structured reading programme and a good range of books that appeal to boys' interests. The school benefits from partnerships with other schools to extend the curriculum. For example, staff and pupils joined with two other schools to develop the curriculum for mathematical problem-solving. The handwriting curriculum is a weakness and does not promote the steady development of skills. There is very effective use of the high quality sports accommodation and the links with the village. For example, pupils from every age group, including Early Years

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Foundation Stage have had the opportunity to play golf, both on the school premises and at the golf club. A wide range of visits, visitors and whole-school projects greatly enhance learning and enjoyment.

Staff use the benefits of being a small school to share information about individual pupils. There are good partnerships with outside agencies and with parents. The arrangements for parents to come into classes at the beginning of the school day with their children works very well and ensures there is a good level of communication.

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 a clear vision of the importance of driving improvement through identifying and supporting each individual pupil's particular needs and using the staff's strengths, the accommodation and the village community to provide a good quality start to pupils' education. She organises staff development efficiently, for example, she has clear plans for supporting the new staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The governors have a varied range of different expertise and through regular visits to the school, have a good understanding of how the school is developing. Safeguarding procedures are effective and are an indicator of the thorough range of policies and systems in place across provision. The school is beginning to develop links with national and global communities to promote community cohesion, but this is in its infancy and is nowhere near the excellent quality of the cohesion in the local community. There is a clear commitment for promoting equality of opportunity. This is evident in the way the school tackled the initial challenge of Polish pupils coming into the school and in the subsequent good progress these pupils make as they move through the different classes.

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

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Data shows that they enter the school with a wide range of different skills but are working broadly within the expectations for their age. By the end of Reception, the great majority of children have reached the early learning goals set for them nationally. Standards in reading have been consistently very good and this is due to the high priority the school gives to this aspect of the curriculum. Teaching, learning and the curriculum are satisfactory. Adult led activities work effectively, with children receiving focussed individual support. Independent learning is not as effective. It does not systematically cover all the different aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and is not stimulating enough. There is not nearly enough time spent in the outdoors. These weaknesses have a negative impact on children's progress. The school works hard to ensure that children play a full part in whole-school activities, overcoming the difficulties of children working in a separate building. Welfare arrangements are good. Adults know the children well and this gives each of them confidence.

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

There was a small rate of return for the questionnaire and there were no issues raised by more than one parent. There was more than one comment from parents' expressing confidence in the school and reflecting the findings of the inspection. Parents appreciate the opportunity to come into the school at the beginning of the school day, when they

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can discuss any issues informally with the class teacher and ensure that their child settles in well for the day. Inspectors agree that this is a valuable opportunity.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Seahouses 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 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 72 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	44	9	56	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	6	38	8	50	2	13	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	38	10	63	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	38	9	56	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	38	10	63	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	38	10	63	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	31	11	69	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)	5	31	10	63	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	38	9	56	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	25	9	56	1	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	25	11	69	1	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	31	11	69	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	38	9	56	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Seahouses First School, Seahouses, NE68 7UE

Thank you very much for the warm welcome that you gave us when we came to inspect your school. We really enjoyed talking to you all and you helped us to understand what you think about all the interesting things that you do in your school.

You will be pleased to know that we judged Seahouses First School to be a good school. Your reading development is particularly impressive and you make good progress in your writing and mathematics. We could see that you enjoy your lessons and work together well to complete your tasks. You use some very imaginative ideas in your writing- the witch's spells were particularly spooky. Your handwriting is not as good as the content of your work and we have asked the school to give you more help to do this better. We have also asked teachers to be clear when they mark your writing to show how you can improve it next time. You can do your best to try hard to make the next piece of writing even better and to take more care with your handwriting.

You told us about all the many different visits and visitors that you have and how much you enjoy your clubs and using your new school hall and we agree that these opportunities are excellent. Your behaviour is also excellent and the older pupils take very good care of the younger children.

One of the things that we have asked your school to do is to make sure that the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get more time to learn outdoors and have more interesting tasks to carry out independently. The teachers through the school work well with the teaching assistants, particularly when you are in groups. The good things in your school are a result of the headteacher and governors working well together to keep making the school a better place. They are also the result of the staff working hard to match your learning to your different needs.

We wish you every success in your future lives.

Yours sincerely,

Maggi Shepherd

Lead inspector

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