

Blyth Morpeth Road First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122257
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340113
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joyce Foggett
Headteacher	Mr Michael Bell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons, seeing 13 teachers. Approximately two thirds of inspection time was spent looking at pupils' learning. They held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the work in pupils' books, teachers' planning, and assessment and tracking information and analysis. Inspectors also looked at responses to questionnaires from 82 parents and carers, 108 pupils and 27 staff. Documents relating to the school's safeguarding and risk assessment procedures were also scrutinised.

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

- how well all pupils make progress
- the impact of teachers' use of assessment to raise pupils' attainment
- what the school does to reduce the barriers to pupils' learning
- how well leadership and management are organised to keep the school moving forward.

Information about the school

The school is undergoing a transition from first to primary school this year. The current Year 5 is the first of this age group to go through the school. This, and an influx of children from other local schools, have caused a significant rise in numbers this year. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is over three times the national average. A very high proportion of pupils is on the special needs register and the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is twice the national average. The school holds a number of awards, including Healthy Schools and Artsmark Silver. It is currently being assessed for the Artsmark Gold award. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage start school in the Nursery after their third birthday and move into the Reception class at the start of the year in which they become five years of age.

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

This is a good school. It has several outstanding features. It serves its community very well through a rigorous analysis and very good understanding of its needs. This is at the heart of its success. The very good leadership of the headteacher has convinced all staff that fully meeting the emotional and social needs of pupils is the key to their academic success. Excellent teamwork has created a learning environment that is exceptionally caring and supportive of pupils and their families. Pupils feel safe and secure and able to learn, and this, together with good teaching, is central to the good progress that pupils make. As a result, standards are rising to age-related expectations and underachievement is reducing quickly. While there have been good improvements to pupils' writing, they do not attain as well in this area as they do in mathematics.

Pupils enjoy their learning. This is because teachers provide exciting and interesting activities and give plenty of support to help all succeed. Teachers' use of assessment is improving, but there are some inconsistencies linked to staffing changes, which mean that progress is not always uniform. The school is aware of this and is addressing it as a priority. The interesting and rich curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' learning and enjoyment of school. It is especially good at developing their personal skills and knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy. Pupils rapidly grow in confidence and eagerly volunteer for responsibilities because they are keen to play a part in improving the school. Their contribution to the school and the wider community is outstanding. Their many productive activities make them truly excellent ambassadors for the school. While the vast majority thoroughly enjoy school and attend regularly, there is small, though reducing, number of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern.

Leadership, management and governance are good because responsibility for improving the school is shared across all staff in the school. Senior leaders have a very good grasp of the school's needs and are well informed by middle leaders of how initiatives are having an impact on pupils' academic and personal development. Given the good improvements since the last inspection and the school's accurate evaluation of its performance, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teachers' use of assessment so that learning is always based on precisely what pupils need to learn next, by sharing the very good practice that has developed in some classes.
- Raise standards in writing, by giving it a higher profile in the school, so that pupils recognise its value and their own developing talents.

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- Improve the attendance of those pupils with high levels of persistent absence.



Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils of all ages thoroughly enjoy their learning. They willingly help each other and share learning experiences in lessons. They quickly develop into confident learners who listen with interest and are keen to ask and answer questions. Their love of learning is seen in their good behaviour which helps lessons to run smoothly, so that time is well used for learning. Pupils work hard at tasks and happily ask for help when they need it. Good attitudes help pupils of all abilities, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make good progress, often from very low starting points. In recent years, attainment at the end of Year 2 has been close to average in mathematics but significantly below average in reading and writing. This pattern is changing and pupils all of abilities have made good gains in reading and writing, as well as mathematics, this year. Standards are rising in Key Stage 1 and are now close to those expected for pupils of this age. A similar picture is seen in Year 5, where a large majority of pupils are at the expected level for their age in English and mathematics and a good proportion exceed this level, especially in mathematics.

Pupils say they feel very safe in school and that bullying is rare. They are absolutely confident that if other children are unkind, then adults will deal with this quickly and effectively. They have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles, and say that the school teaches them how to avoid unsafe situations, eat properly and enjoy the many opportunities for vigorous exercise. In all of these things, the pupils themselves make an outstanding contribution to each other's feelings of safety and well-being. Peer mentors provide support and a listening ear for pupils who have problems with friendships or in managing their behaviour; sports leaders and house captains give up lunchtimes to coach other pupils in a wide range of sports' skills, and teach them the value of good team skills, and the school council is constantly looking for areas of the school to improve next, such as improving choices for school dinners. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the local community too, by giving concerts, being involved in the local allotment group and providing hanging baskets for many members of the local community. Overall, pupils exhibit outstanding social and moral development. The low attendance of a small minority of pupils reduces the otherwise positive picture of attendance for the majority, who attend regularly and on time.

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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have very good knowledge of pupils' social and emotional needs. They use this well to engage and involve pupils throughout lessons. They are alert to pupils' responses and have excellent skills in managing behaviour. Their expertise creates a very secure and harmonious learning environment in which pupils thrive because they feel safe and secure and have excellent relationships with adults. Teachers provide a wealth of interesting and challenging activities for pupils, which give plenty of opportunity for 'hands-on', practical learning which pupils relish. Where teachers' use of assessment is of a high quality, there is a very close match between pupils' needs and the tasks they are given. In these lessons pupils of all abilities make good and sometimes outstanding progress, because they are able to think for themselves and work independently. While senior leaders have led significant improvement to the use of assessment to support learning, recent staff changes have resulted in some inconsistency across the school. Where there is a good level of consistency, as in the good quality of marking and feedback to pupils, this is having a noticeable effect on their rate of improvement.

The curriculum places strong emphasis on basic skills and is well adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, but not at the expense of other subjects or pupils' interests. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development particularly well. The development of the creative curriculum since the last inspection has given pupils many opportunities to discover new interests and talents through music and the arts, which they regularly share with the local community. Pupils are currently making good use of their close links with the local community's, 'Tellers of the Back Lanes', to prepare for the school's centenary celebration later in the year. Pupils' learning is well enriched through exciting

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visits, such as the Year 4 residential visit to the Lake District, as well as by many visitors, such as a local miner who has brought to life the bygone era of their town. The school provides an excellent range and quantity of after-school clubs, enjoyed both by pupils and their parents and carers.

The school's overarching strength is in the exceptional care, guidance and support which underpin pupils' sense of security and confidence to succeed. Staff use their detailed knowledge of pupils and their families to provide prompt and effective support whenever it is needed. Parents and carers speak highly of the way they have been supported to help their children succeed, and of how well the school provides for their special needs. Vulnerable pupils have their needs assessed quickly and all interventions and support are carefully monitored to ensure that they are having the required impact. Exemplary practice in nurture provision and in the arrangements for 'house lunch', designed to promote pupils' social skills, have won recognition from other local schools who are keen to learn from it and to follow the school's lead.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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 provides clear direction for the school based on a vision of high-quality care as the foundation of good learning. He is very well supported by a strong leadership team with members who are highly skilled and dedicated to improving the school. Excellent teamwork ensures that all information about pupils and their families is shared effectively so that difficulties are anticipated and support provided quickly. Leadership and management roles and responsibilities are well distributed among staff, who are clear about the part they play in monitoring and improving the school.

Accurate assessment of the school's performance in all areas means that the school has the right priorities for further improvement. This means it is well placed for further improvement. The school has good systems for ensuring that all pupils of all abilities have access to a curriculum and teaching that meets their needs, so that all have an equal opportunity to make progress. Excellent guidance systems ensure that discrimination is never an issue because pupils are taught to recognise and value difference through the many links they have with schools in other cultures.

Governors give good support to the school and challenge it to improve as a result of regular monitoring activities. They share the headteacher's determination to reduce barriers to pupils' learning and reflect this through budget decisions which recognise the

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need to fund good levels of support for pupils from adults. They ensure that safeguarding requirements are fully met and that the school's risk assessments ensure pupils' safety and security.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is based on a thorough assessment of local needs and on a commitment to make the school the focal point of the community. The excellent contribution to the local community is seen in the wide range of activities which involve pupils, parents and carers, and local residents, as well as police and members of the local fire brigade. The school recognises that national links to different communities in Britain are at an early stage of development as links are being forged with a school in a nearby city.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	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 a good start to their learning in the Nursery because carefully planned induction and home visits from staff have prepared them well for school. Children quickly develop confidence in the secure, nurturing environment and are able to direct their own activities very well after they have settled in. Children make good progress to the end of Reception in all areas of learning and excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Despite this, because of their very low starting points, far fewer children reach the expected level for their age than are seen nationally. Children love learning and are keen to explore the many exciting activities provided. They are well supported by adults who are well briefed on each child's needs, so that interventions are focused on developing individual learning through carefully considered

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questions and prompts. All staff are adept at assessing children's progress through regular observations and this information is well used to plan the next steps. Excellent teamwork helps staff to share information about children quickly and to share their good practice for the benefit of all children. Welfare requirements are good and go beyond what is required to ensure that children are safe, secure and well cared for.

Links with parents and carers are excellent. They are well informed about their children's progress through the children's 'Learning journeys' and are supported to help their children's learning through regular open days and workshops. Leadership and management are good; responsibilities are well delegated so that all staff play a part in improving provision and there is a constant search for ways to improve.

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

Parents and carers hold very positive views of the school. They value the support they and their children are given and are full of praise for how approachable and helpful staff are. Parents and carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities speak highly of the provision that is made for them to learn as well as they can and join in with all that is on offer in the school. The vast majority of parents and carers felt that their children are safe and happy in school. Inspectors agree, and this is reflected in the judgement of care, guidance and support as excellent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blyth Morpeth Road 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 82 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 306 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	68	23	28	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	52	63	28	34	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	56	33	40	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	57	32	39	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	55	67	26	32	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	54	33	40	5	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	52	38	46	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)	41	50	34	41	4	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	61	28	34	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	61	25	30	4	5	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	45	55	33	40	4	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	60	73	20	24	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	71	23	28	1	1	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.



25 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Blyth Morpeth Road Primary School, Blyth, NE24 1HZ

Thank you all for making us so welcome when we visited your school. Your friendliness and willingness to help made our visit a real pleasure. We agree with you that your school is a good one and here are some of the reasons why.

- You work hard in lessons, behave well and help each other with your learning.
- Staff look after you extremely well and we could see why you feel so safe and happy in school. As some of you said, 'There's always someone there to help.'
- We saw that your teachers have some excellent ways of helping you learn good social skills, such as house lunch and the nurture group.
- You seize the chance to help in school and make an excellent contribution to making it a better place.
- The curriculum is good fun and gives you plenty of variety in your learning.
- Your headteacher, staff and governors have really good ideas for making the school better and work well together to do this.

To help the staff and yourselves to make a good school even better, we thought of these things to work on.

- The school should help all teachers to make good assessment of your learning so that you always learn at a good rate.
- Staff can help you become better writers and share your writing with each other more by putting it on display so that you can learn from each other.

There's a third one as well – it's for those of you who don't come to school as often as the others – and that is for the school to help you have better attendance so that you enjoy all the lovely things that happen in school and learn as well as your friends.

The team wish you a very happy year and hope that your centenary celebrations are a great success. We're sure they will be, because you all work so hard. Keep it up!

Yours sincerely

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead Inspector

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