

Athersley North Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131157
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	341102
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Clark

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Lodge
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Newcombe
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including policies, the school improvement plan and analysis of school records on pupils' progress and attainment. The inspectors also analysed 68 parental questionnaires.

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

- The progress pupils make and how well they apply themselves and work in lessons, in particular boys in English lessons and the more able pupils in all lessons.
- Do children make enough progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage to prepare them for their future learning.
- Is the quality of teaching sharply focused and challenging enough? Do pupils develop good learning skills?
- Do leaders, at all levels, have the skill and drive to improve standards?

Information about the school

The school is larger than average and serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well above average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also well above average. The school provides for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Nursery and a Reception class. The children's centre on site was not subject to this inspection.

The school building has been completely refurbished over a two-year period. Building work affected all areas of the school and was completed in January 2009.

The school has received Activemark Gold and Healthy Schools Gold awards. The school also received an award for Outstanding Achievement in Improving Health and Reducing Inequalities.

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

2

Main findings

Athersley North is an improving school. The robust caring ethos and strong support for parents and carers contribute significantly to the pupils' good personal development and positive attitudes. The clarity of vision and drive of the headteacher and her senior leadership team promote a strong trend of improving standards. However, attainment is still low.

Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are much lower than those normally expected. The standards reached by Year 2 and Year 6 are well below average but are improving at a much faster rate than previously as pupils' good learning skills become firmly embedded. Standards in writing are not as high as those for reading and mathematics. Occasionally, the more able pupils are not challenged sufficiently to reach higher standards, especially in mathematics.

Pupils' behaviour and attendance has improved well since the last inspection because of the consistent application of strong policies and the close monitoring and support the school gives through the work of the parental support assistants and learning mentors. There are robust procedures to keep pupils safe. Pupils' understanding of maintaining a healthy lifestyle is a particular strength, and they are effective ambassadors of leading a healthy life to the wider community.

The school's leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school and, as a result, pupils of all abilities make good progress. Lessons have a clear focus and are well planned. Activities are sharply focused to meet the needs of all pupils. However, occasionally, lessons do not provide enough opportunity for more able pupils to think for themselves and use their skills fully. Teachers make good use of detailed and regular assessments of pupils' progress to plan future learning. They provide good guidance for pupils but do not always encourage them to check and improve their own written work.

The curriculum is well organised and exciting. It serves the needs of all pupils, including the most vulnerable, well because teachers involve them fully in planning and decision making. The pupils' mathematical and problem-solving skills are not always promoted systematically through other subjects.

The headteacher, staff and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well because of the thorough analysis of data and regular first-hand analysis of teaching and learning. All staff are committed to school improvement and have the leadership skills to make a difference. There have been good improvements to all aspects of provision and these have impacted on pupils' well-being and increasingly good learning and progress. The impact on the community through a strong partnership with neighbouring schools,

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including special schools, South Yorkshire police and other agencies is increasingly enriching pupils' lives and very much appreciated by parents. The school has clearly identified the next steps needed for raising attainment and these reflect the views of the inspection team. The improvements made, despite the disruption from a sustained period of building work, indicate that the school has a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards in writing by July 2010 through:
 - implementing the actions identified in the current school improvement plan
 - ensuring pupils are consistently involved in checking and improving their written work.
- Improve the attainment of the more able pupils, especially in mathematics, by July 2010 through:
 - developing mathematical skills at a good level through all subjects
 - ensuring a brisk pace to lessons and increasing the level of challenge to the more able pupils.
- 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**

All groups of pupils make good progress relative to their starting points because of the good teaching and interesting curriculum. Pupils work hard and concentrate well which is a good improvement since the last inspection. Very occasionally, the teachers allow pupils too long to complete tasks and this limits the challenge to the more able. Most pupils take a pride in their writing, although they do not always have the opportunity or encouragement in the marking to check the accuracy and improve their own work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the sensitive support of adults in school and the great attention paid to pupils' individual needs.

Standards by Year 2 and Year 6 have been lower than average since the last inspection. However, there has been sustained improvement for all abilities including the high proportion of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities. The rate of progress pupils make has improved through the very focused use teachers make of analysis of information on pupils and better teaching. Standards for the most able pupils have improved in the last year but not as securely as for other abilities.

Pupils work very well collaboratively taking different roles within their groups. They enjoy their time at school. Levels of attendance are average and very few pupils are persistently absent because of the school's robust monitoring and good relationships with parents. Relationships throughout school are positive. Pupils are confident that they are looked after well and, consequently, feel safe. Pupils enjoy the many chances they

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have to make a real difference to the school and locality through their roles as 'patrol officers', 'maintenance crew', 'playground leaders', 'school councillors' and many other challenging jobs. They are very proud of the boiler suits and fluorescent jackets they wear!

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	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Features of most lessons were:

- good classroom management helping maintain a positive learning environment
- clear lesson planning, which meets the needs of different groups of pupils, ensuring good rates of progress
- marking effectively showing pupils how well they are doing and how they can improve further
- questioning, and speaking and listening activities used well to allow pupils to explore ideas and extend their thinking
- teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to ensure all pupils are fully included and enjoy activities.

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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However, in a few lessons there is occasionally a lack of challenge for the more able pupils and the pace of learning is not always brisk enough. For example, sometimes activities are too directed and do not encourage pupils to select the skills to be used. The curriculum is richly enhanced by visits and visitors. It is practical and challenging. Pupils and their parents have been involved in choosing the themes and areas to be learned which encourages a sense of commitment and perseverance. There is good planning for regular, direct teaching of basic skills such as writing and numeracy. Although opportunities for writing and mathematics are built into many subjects, those for mathematics are not always sharply focused enough. The planning for pupils' personal, social and health development is a strength of the curriculum. Very good use of a programme to develop their understanding of their emotional and social needs, in collaboration with outside agencies such as the police and nursing services, makes a significant contribution to pupils' well-being and self-confidence.

The support, care and guidance for pupils are good. These aspects are based on very strong and well-planned policies which are consistently and imaginatively applied. The welfare of all pupils, especially the most vulnerable, is paramount and staff are rigorous and persistent in ensuring high levels of care. Very good partnerships with education welfare, behavioural support units, the on-site children's centre and many other agencies promote high standards of care that are appreciated by parents.

The school's breakfast and after-school club provides a happy and secure environment. Pupils enjoy a range of fun activities managed by school staff.

All aspects of provision are much more consistent than at the time of the previous inspection and the impact is now being felt on improving attainment and achievement.

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 senior leadership is ambitious and thorough in its work. There has been a strong and effective training programme to ensure all staff fulfil their leadership and management roles well which is a good improvement since the last inspection. This has had a strong impact on improving provision and personal development and is now moving standards which have previously proved hard to shift. The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead from the front through the thoroughness and accuracy of their own monitoring and evaluating and the high expectations set for all staff. Their presence in the grounds at the start of the day and at break and lunchtimes around the

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school is a significant factor in building good relationships with parents and improving pupils' behaviour. The governors provide good support and challenge to the school. They are well informed through their first-hand scrutiny of attainment and progress data and monitoring activities which include shadowing the headteacher through a day, as well as regular discussions with pupils and lesson observations. School improvements are systematically planned and initiatives are well managed. Occasionally, the plans for improvement are overcautious, and the school is now well placed to implement initiatives more quickly. The school promotes community cohesion well through well planned collaborative work, led by the headteacher, with other local schools and communities. This has had a significant impact in improving the lives of many parents through involvement in learning and qualifications, and contributed to a measurable decline in youth crime rates within the area. All aspects are planned for and carefully evaluated. Safeguarding procedures are effective and meet current requirements. The school is inclusive, and the strong emphasis on working with the community and breaking down barriers to learning, means equality of opportunity is promoted well.

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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

- Children make satisfactory progress from their significantly low starting points. Standards are well below average by time they start Year 1. There is an improving trend in the standards children reach.
- A key strength of the provision is the successful focus on developing personal and social skills. Children, as a result, make a secure and happy start to their school life.

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Their attitudes and interest in learning are positive and close to average expectations.

- Children are looked after extremely well and blossom because of the attention paid to their safety and individual needs.
- Teaching is often imaginative and lively. Good use is made of songs and rhymes to develop children's interest and knowledge. However, adults' questions do not always challenge children sufficiently to expand their thinking.
- Following a period of staff change and the recent opening of the new Early Years Foundation Stage unit, the vibrant new leader is working closely with her team to ensure all adults fully understand and apply the new assessment and planning systems in place to support children's next steps in learning.

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

Most parents and carers are positive about all that the school has to offer. Parents are particularly appreciative of the quality of leadership and the impact of the headteacher and deputy headteacher on all aspects of the school's work. They also welcome the impact of links within the community and feel that 'We all work together now.' The inspectors uphold the positive views of the parents. The parents are particularly appreciative of the initiatives to promote a better lifestyle. 'I love the healthy taster days.' A small minority of parents comment that not all pupils behave well enough all the time. However, they largely feel that the school manages behaviour extremely well and that it has greatly improved. 'School gives me peace of mind', typifies their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Athersley North Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 242 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	49	71	44	7	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	85	53	70	44	4	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	63	40	89	56	6	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	33	95	59	12	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	61	38	91	57	6	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	67	42	85	53	7	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	37	97	61	1	1	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	59	39	89	58	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	34	98	61	6	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	62	39	76	48	19	12	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	51	33	93	60	9	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	75	47	78	49	6	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	82	52	67	42	6	4	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.



Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school this week. We really enjoyed talking to you about your work, speaking to staff and joining you in lessons, at lunchtime and in assembly. You should be proud of yourselves, because you are polite and behave well. You enjoy taking responsibility and take your roles as patrol officers, playground leaders and maintenance crew very seriously.

Your school provides you with a sound education. It is improving all the time because of the leadership of the headteacher and her staff and your hard work and positive attitudes. All the staff work hard to make sure you are safe and happy in your learning. Your parents told me they are pleased with the improvements made since the last inspection. You make good progress in your lessons but standards are not always as high as they could be in writing and mathematics by Year 6. Lessons are well planned and teachers make learning fun. Sometimes you are given too long to complete your work and occasionally you do not take enough care to check your writing. You told me that you are involved in planning and choosing some of the things you learn about and you are rightly proud of this. Many of you work alongside your parents on exciting projects such as the school mural which was opened by a well-known artist during the time we were in school.

To make your school even better, we have asked the headteacher and staff to do the following:

- Help you to check and improve your own writing.
- Give you more opportunities to use your mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Make sure that lessons are always at a fast enough pace to challenge the most able pupils and keep you all thinking.

Keep working hard and enjoy school!

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