

Rothbury First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122221
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	359191
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2010
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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Famelton
Headteacher	Mrs Dianne Butler
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Six lessons were observed and six teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff and discussions were carried out with parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised pupils' work and their annual reports as well as documents related to the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding, tracking information and teachers' planning. They also analysed 44 parental questionnaires.

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

- The features of teaching and the curriculum that are leading to the differing trends in standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and whether these trends are evident in Key Stage 2.
- What impact the small size of the school has on pupils' personal development and whether healthy living is at a higher standard than other aspects.
- The leadership and management of community cohesion and pupils' understanding of the local, national and global perspectives.
- The provision across the areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the consistency of children's progress.

Information about the school

The school serves the local village with a few pupils coming from the surrounding rural area. It is smaller than most primary schools and has a lower percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals than average. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is higher than usual, although the proportion of pupils overall with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower. The school has both Healthy Schools Status and the Activemark award.

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. Leaders set a clear priority of focusing on the needs of individual pupils. The advantages of being a small school are used effectively by managers to ensure that there are very good informal communication systems used by staff. There are effective school self-evaluation strategies, resulting in successful implementation and evaluation of new systems to sustain the good standards across reading, writing and mathematics. Staff are committed to improving provision and appreciate taking part in decision-making. The governing body play an important role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. These features result in a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their outdoor learning is not as effective as it should be. Assessment in the nursery is not good enough to provide information in order to plan for future learning. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make consistently good progress because teaching and the curriculum match their needs well. Assessment systems are thorough and pupils appreciate the feedback they get in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and the programmes of work and additional support they receive ensure that they make good progress. All pupils, including those with a statement of special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school. By the time pupils leave, attainment is above the expected level in writing and mathematics and well above in reading.

Pupils respond well to the school's emphasis on personal development. All staff know each pupil well, and play their part in the good quality care, guidance and support provided. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of keeping healthy. The school takes pupils' safety seriously and parents, carers and pupils all say that they appreciate this. The school provides some interesting opportunities for pupils to contribute to the community, particularly in the locality, but provision is not planned systematically and so pupils' understanding of national and global communities is patchy. Behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school. Pupils respond well to each other across the different age groups, with older pupils thoroughly enjoying looking after the younger children.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the progress children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage and improve provision, by:
 - substantially increasing the opportunities for children to learn outdoors as an

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integral part of their choices for independent learning

- making the independent learning activities more stimulating, both indoors and outdoors, with a balance across all the different areas of learning and
 - challenging more-able children consistently
 - improving the planning and assessment in the nursery.
- Analyse the current provision for promoting community cohesion, identify the weaker aspects of provision, introduce learning opportunities to strengthen those areas and evaluate the impact of the innovations on pupils' learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils achieve well and thoroughly enjoy their learning. They are particularly confident in taking part in whole-class sessions and provide extended and articulate answers to teachers' questions. For example, pupils were delighted to identify inappropriate materials for objects, such as chocolate for a teapot. Pupils enter Year 1 with standards that are broadly at the expected level. They build systematically on their basic skills and by the end of Year 2, attainment is above the expected level. This good achievement continues in Key Stage 2, where a larger proportion of more-able pupils than expected reach the higher National Curriculum level by the end of Year 4. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress both in their academic and personal development. All pupils work well together in pairs and small groups, cooperating well to complete shared tasks. They enjoy taking responsibility, such as older pupils being buddies for younger children. They appreciate learning about different cultures and taking part in events in the village. For example, pupils thoroughly enjoyed leading a procession around the village where they showed off their Easter hats. They do not have such a good understanding of the wider locality, national or global perspectives or take part in making decisions about school life. Behaviour is good and is often excellent in lessons. Pupils move around the large building very sensibly and are very courteous to adults. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy, articulating clearly about the range of different types of food and drink that help to promote a healthy lifestyle, producing healthy snack cookbooks and discussing the benefits of different types of exercise. They appreciate opportunities to demonstrate healthy eating, such as when older pupils during an extended project, made a wide variety of healthy snacks to distribute to other classes.

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	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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?

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and make lessons enjoyable. They have good subject knowledge and teach basic skills systematically. The organisation of group work is effective and provides different work to match pupils' varying needs. They generally set a fast pace to lessons, although there are occasions when it drops and the rate of learning slows. There is a good balance between whole-class sessions and group work. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to provide different ways of explaining new learning to pupils. Teaching assistants work effectively to support groups to carry out activities, but sometimes miss opportunities to interact with individuals in whole-class sessions. The signing that is used to support the profoundly deaf pupils works very well indeed. Teachers use the half-termly assessment focus well to track pupils' progress and to inform future planning. The curriculum is well balanced and there is a good range of different visitors into the school to enrich pupils' experiences. They particularly enjoyed the group from a school in Uganda. However, the resourcing for the curriculum in Year 1 does not give pupils enough opportunities for practical learning as a transition from the Reception class. This reduces the range of different learning opportunities as pupils move to the more formal Key Stage 1 curriculum. Care, support and guidance are a key strength of the school and are particularly good for vulnerable pupils. For example, during some recent difficulties where there was a fugitive in the village, the school managed the situation very positively. Parents and carers were very grateful that their children were cared for so sensitively during the ordeal.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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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 works very closely with the staff team to make management decisions that drive improvement across the work of the school. For example, the school identified a trend of lower standards in mathematics, introduced a new range of resources, which helped to raise standards across the school in this subject. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the qualities of effective teaching and analyse key strengths and weaknesses accurately. The governing body is very experienced and plays an active part in challenging school leaders. There is a strong focus on equal opportunities by matching the needs of each individual's academic and personal development, as well as tackling discrimination. Leaders work effectively to ensure that school's good safeguarding systems protect pupils. There is a commitment to creating positive partnerships with parents and carers. For example, the organisation at the start of each day where families come into school well before the start of lessons is very successful in settling pupils into their classrooms and allowing parents and carers opportunities to discuss issues with staff. Although leaders manage a range of interesting community links, they have not addressed this systematically enough in order to provide pupils with a comprehensive understanding across religious, ethnic or socio-economic groups or the national and global perspectives.

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	3

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

2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress through this key stage. Most enter the nursery with skills that are broadly in line with the expected level and leave reception having reached the early learning goals. Induction systems are good and despite the early stage of the school term, children had a good understanding of basic routines. Children in reception come into school enthusiastically and settle down quickly into their activities. There is an effective balance between whole-class, group and independent learning activities. Some activities are rather pedestrian and do not consistently challenge more-able children. For example, in a practical numeracy activity there was no opportunity for children to tackle higher numbers. Staff ensure that every child experiences key activities led by adults. Although there are some opportunities for outdoor learning, they are not nearly regular enough, are not organised as an integral part of children's learning and do not provide different levels of challenge for the older and younger children in this shared space. Planning in reception is thorough and ensures that the requirements of the curriculum are covered systematically over time. This is not consistent in the nursery and the assessment systems for these younger children are not comprehensive enough. Children benefit from being in a small school, where all the staff know them very well. They enjoy joining in whole-school activities. Monitoring of provision in this key stage is not as effective as in the rest of the school. However, there are now clear plans to improve the quality of provision and to monitor how that improvement effects the progress children make.

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

The strongest agreement by parents and carers of the questions in the questionnaire, was that their children enjoy school and that they are kept safe. Inspectors endorse these views. There were a good number of written comments from parents and carers on how pleased they were overall with the work of the school, that their children were happy and were progressing well.

A few parents and carers were concerned that they were not given enough information

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about their children's progress or about the curriculum, that opportunities were missed for the older pupils to take responsibility and that there was little feedback when their suggestions were not taken up by the school. Parents' and carers' comments included some about the lack of outdoor learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the lack of challenge in some learning. Inspectors endorse the identification of these weaknesses in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They judge the opportunities for parents and carers to communicate with staff each morning as very effective. Their scrutiny of school reports showed a comprehensive outline of individual pupils' progress across all subjects.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rothbury 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 44 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 110 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	59	15	34	2	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	70	11	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	34	23	52	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	39	19	43	3	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	43	18	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	39	17	39	3	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	41	19	43	2	5	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)	19	43	17	39	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	45	17	39	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	27	25	57	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	30	23	52	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	19	43	17	39	2	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	48	18	41	2	5	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



23 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rothbury First School, Morpeth, NE65 7PG

The other inspector and I would like to thank you very much for giving us such a warm welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and listening to your views. You helped us to understand what you think about your school. You go to a good school. Your headteacher, staff and governors all work closely together to make your school a good place to learn. You achieve well and by the time you leave the school your standards are higher than expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Your behaviour is good and we were impressed with how well you all play together, with the older pupils looking after the younger ones so well. When we had discussions with you, you told us all about how to keep healthy and the questionnaires showed that you appreciate how the school helps you to do this. We think this aspect of your development is excellent. The teachers make your lessons and the curriculum interesting and you enjoy learning. We were very impressed with how much you learnt about life in Uganda from the visitors you had last week. We have asked your school to make sure that you get more opportunities to contribute more to communities. You can all make sure that you work hard to understand your place in the national and international communities.

We have asked your school to make sure that the children in the Reception and Nursery classes have a chance every day to learn outside, except when the weather is really bad. We have also asked that more-able children have harder activities to do and that the planning and assessment of the youngest children is more effective. You told us that you think that the staff take good care of you, keeping you safe and we agree with you. We wish you all the best for your future lives in this school as well as when you move on to the middle and high schools.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Shepherd

Lead Inspector

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