

Pelton Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134078
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	381603
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
Lead inspector	Gordon Potter

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	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Irwin
Headteacher	Wendy Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Gordon Potter
Derek Sleightholme
Peter Bannon

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 28 lessons taught by 15 teachers, including joint lesson observations and visits to several classes with the headteacher. The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and carers, and spoke to the school's most recent external Development Partner. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and strategic planning, examples of pupils' work, assessment data and monitoring records. They also scrutinised the 107 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as questionnaires from pupils and 23 staff. No responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were available to assist in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are a few pupils of Irish Traveller and Roma/Gypsy heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is well above average. The school has Healthy School status. It has achieved Activemark and the International School Award. Since the previous inspection the school has met the current floor standards, although it dipped below the standard in 2011.

The school is federated with a primary school in a neighbouring village. The headteacher has been in post since January 2010 and leads both schools. There has been a significant number of changes to staffing and the Governing Body in the past two years.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Pupils, parents and carers are very positive about the school, especially how inclusive it is in valuing all pupils equally.
- Pupils’ achievement is good. From starting points that are generally below age-related expectations on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress to attain standards that are typically in line with the national average. School data, supported by inspection evidence, show that currently, pupils are making good progress and are set to continue to achieve well.
- Teaching is good with some that is outstanding. It enthuses pupils and helps them make rapid progress. While teaching is consistently good, there are a few shortcomings. For example, it is sometimes too teacher-directed and opportunities are occasionally missed to allow pupils time to practise and apply their skills in the exciting ways seen in the best lessons. While there is some excellent practice, marking and target-setting are inconsistent in telling pupils how to improve their work.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school. They enjoy school and say that misbehaviour is uncommon and is effectively dealt with by their teachers. There are highly-effective procedures to support the learning of the few pupils who find difficulty in managing their own behaviour. As a result of well-targeted initiatives, attendance is average and on a securely rising trend.
- Leadership and management are good. Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, phase and subject leaders relish opportunities to develop effective team work and be accountable for raising attainment. They are rigorous in using data and monitor teaching effectively. Continuing professional development is used effectively to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum. Leaders and managers accurately evaluate the school’s strengths and weaknesses. They use the outcomes astutely to target further improvements. The governing body supports senior leaders well and offers rigorous challenge.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rates at which pupils make progress and raise attainment by:
 - providing pupils with even more opportunities in lessons to work independently or together in a range of investigative activities which allow them to apply and develop their basic skills across subjects
 - ensuring that marking is of consistently good quality in showing pupils what they need to do to improve their work
 - ensuring that the good practice that exists in school in target-setting is used consistently well so that pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enjoy lessons. They are hardworking and keen to give of their best. They respond well to good teaching that stimulates their learning. They enjoy being actively involved in finding things out for themselves. Pupils respond positively to challenging activities and are keen to participate. For example, in an outstanding lesson, lower-ability pupils in Years 5 and 6 were set challenging tasks to extend their skills in identifying sounds and letters. They applied what they learned very effectively to develop their skills in spelling, writing and information and communication technology (ICT). They rose eagerly to the challenge and made outstanding progress as a result

Children's starting points on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are generally below those expected for their age. Boys' starting points are generally well below expectations. By the end of Reception and Key Stage 1 attainment has been below average and progress satisfactory over time. However, this has been tackled rigorously by improving the quality of teaching. Consequently, progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 is accelerating rapidly and securely and achievement is now good. Attainment in reading has improved in Key Stage 1 and is now broadly average. By the end of Key Stage 2 attainment in reading is average.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly average, although it dipped in 2011 because the Year 6 cohort had a higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Overall, pupils make good and improving progress as they move up through the school because leaders and managers have been successful in improving the quality of teaching. School data, supported by inspection evidence, show that pupils are making good progress and achieving well across the school. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that the gap between boys and girls by the end of Year 6 is narrowing rapidly and securely.

All groups of pupils including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs and pupils of Irish Traveller and Roma/Gypsy heritage make good progress because the school identifies their needs accurately and provides effective support.

Most parents and carers are of the opinion that their children are making good progress.

Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers believe that pupils are taught well and inspection evidence supports this view. In the best lessons, teachers make learning stimulating. They explain clearly to pupils what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded. Work is well-matched to the needs of all learners. Teachers employ ICT well to engage pupils. They plan effective opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities, including research, role-play, games and investigations. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, a wide range of stimulating, engaging activities captures children's imagination, allows them to investigate for themselves and moves their learning on quickly in all areas of their development. There is very effective teaching of linking sounds and letters and good use of the outdoor provision.

Teachers use questions well to check what pupils already know and the progress they are making. There are strong relationships and teachers and teaching assistants interact well with pupils to support them in their learning. Lessons have a measured pace which helps pupils to consolidate knowledge and assimilate new learning. In an outstanding lesson in a Years 5/6 class, for example, pupils were questioned probingly to ascertain what they already knew and were then set challenging tasks to investigate and to apply their skills in measuring. They had a clear understanding of the level of their work and what they needed to do to take their learning to the next level. Occasionally, teachers direct learning too much and opportunities are missed for pupils to practise and apply their skills on their own. For example, in some lessons, teachers spend too much time explaining and provide pupils with too little time to get on with tasks independently. Marking is done regularly and is generally used well to tell pupils how successful they have been in specific tasks. However, it is used less consistently well to tell pupils how to improve their work or how to take the next steps in their learning.

The impact of the planned curriculum is good overall. There are many activities which help pupils to see the links between subjects and to develop and apply important skills, including teamwork and research. For example, work on topics such as the Victorians and local history including trips to the Great North and Beamish museums, develops pupils' understanding of local history and geography. Research into life in Kenya, or the history of Egypt and other faiths and cultures, and links with a school in France, develop pupils' imaginative, writing and language skills, as well as their cultural understanding. In these cases the impact of teaching on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are many highly-successful and exciting opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects across the curriculum and to solve problems and apply their skills in mathematics. However, this approach could be developed further by offering even more opportunities for pupils to work independently or together in a range of investigative activities.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils enjoy school. They are very polite to adults and respectful of each other and their school surroundings. Most parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaires agree that, overall, there is a good standard of behaviour at the school. However, a few parents and carers express some concerns about behaviour in lessons. Good behaviour was evident in all lessons observed during the inspection and around the school. In those lessons where pupils were excited by their learning, behaviour was exemplary. The inspectors talked to many pupils during playtimes and more formally in group discussions. Pupils say that

behaviour strategies are used effectively and that the few pupils who find managing their own behaviour difficult respond well to a consistent approach and clear guidance. They believe that behaviour has improved significantly in school in the past two years. They say that bullying in any form is not a problem. They feel safe and know that 'Buddies' and the teachers and other adults in school will help with any problems if they arise. Pupils particularly appreciate the praise system which encourages them to achieve well, work hard and develop teamwork and social skills. The school council works very hard on behalf of other pupils. Its members are particularly proud of the actions they have initiated to improve aspects of school life, such as improvements to play equipment and strategies to help all pupils behave well.

The school has been successful in improving attendance which has been improving securely over time and is now average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased significantly. However, despite the school's best efforts, a few families remain to be convinced of the benefits of ensuring that their children attend regularly.

Leadership and management

New leadership has had a remarkable impact on the school in a short time. The headteacher is ably supported in the drive for improvement by other senior leaders and managers including the governing body. Senior leadership provides the school with a clear vision for success and a sharply-focused approach to driving school improvement. Leaders and managers at all levels welcome the increased delegation of responsibilities that have made their contribution much more effective in improving the quality of teaching and raising attainment. This has been done through the development of effective teams, well-targeted professional development and the sharing of good practice. The school has sharpened the rigour with which it analyses pupils' attainment and progress. This enables the swift identification of groups and individuals who need additional support to close any gaps in their learning. However, target-setting methods which have been recently introduced to help pupils understand how to take the next steps in their learning are not fully embedded across school. Robust monitoring and self-evaluation highlight the right priorities for improvement and lead to effective action to tackle them. Rigorous self-evaluation ensures that the school has a clear understanding of its strengths and where it could improve further.

Capacity to improve is good. All subject leaders consistently apply the school's procedures to monitor and plan initiatives which have improved teaching and the curriculum. As a result, attainment is rising securely and rapidly. The school has a clear commitment to and effective systems for promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. Safeguarding procedures meet the current government requirements. The school has forged a good range of effective partnerships that provide opportunities in music and sport, for example, and support pupils who have a range of learning, emotional and behavioural needs and their families. The governing body is highly-supportive of the school. It has successfully managed a period of significant and difficult change. It provides a good level of challenge.

The curriculum is good. There is a strong and effective focus on developing basic skills in English, mathematics and the use of ICT. Across the school there is a coherent and systematic approach to teaching reading with a balanced emphasis on letters and sounds, comprehension and, as pupils become more proficient, opportunities to analyse character and authors' use of language and plot. There is a good range of well-planned enrichment activities including visits to residential centres, places of worship and museums and visits to school from coaches and writers. These activities play an important role in enhancing pupils'

personal development and their strong understanding of other faiths and cultures. Accordingly, pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. This is further enhanced by the school's emphasis on developing pupils' interest in local history and a detailed programme of religious education. There are many popular extra-curricular clubs which promote learning and enjoyment in sporting, artistic and environmental activities.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



3 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pelton Community Primary School, Chester le Street, DH2 1EZ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. We particularly enjoyed talking to you about your school and your work. We were impressed with your behaviour and by your politeness and the care you show for one another. Your school takes good care of you so that you feel safe in school. We very much enjoyed your assemblies. Most of you attend school regularly – well done! However, a few of you are absent from school too frequently and this slows your progress.

You go to a good school and your headteacher and the governing body know how to make it better. Your teachers look after you well and make your lessons fun, although they could give you even more opportunities to work together on exciting activities in writing and mathematics. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers, your lessons and after-school clubs and visits. Your parents and carers like the school very much.

In order to help you reach even higher standards and make faster progress, I am asking your teachers to make sure that:

- you always have enough opportunities to find things out for yourselves and then use what you have learned to improve your skills
- you know how to improve your work and have clear targets which help you understand the next steps you need to take to improve your work.

You can help by continuing to do your best and attending regularly. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Gordon Potter
Lead Inspector

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