

Simonside Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108698
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	377802
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Lead inspector	Gill Gleghorn

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Layla Hassan
Headteacher	James Purvis
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Gill Gleghorn
Bobbi Mothersdale

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days notice. The inspectors observed 16 lessons, including lessons in the two units for hearing impaired children, taught by nine class teachers. They also talked to pupils about their learning and scrutinised in detail the work in pupils' books. Inspectors checked pupils' reading across the age range. In addition, inspectors held discussions with pupils, members of the governing body and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation, including the school's records relating to pupils' progress and achievement, evidence relating to leadership and management, monitoring, evaluation and safeguarding. They also took into account the questionnaires returned by pupils, members of staff and 71 parents and carers. There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to aid inspection planning.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for a free school meal is well above average. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is well above average. The school hosts two units for pupils with hearing impairment. The school does not meet the current floor standard. The school has achieved Healthy School status and the ICT Mark. There is a breakfast club which is managed by the school.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- Simonside is a satisfactory school. The high quality care and support encourages pupils' good behaviour. Parents and carers endorse this. The school is not good because pupils make satisfactory rather than good progress and some pupils do not reach nationally expected levels in writing and mathematics, despite much improved progress recently. There is some unevenness in the way teachers promote pupils' writing and mathematical skills.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children settle quickly and make good progress in their development. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6. Their progress is improving, including in their writing and mathematics. More pupils are now reaching the expected levels of attainment by the end of Year 6, though there is some way to go. Pupils in the hearing impaired units make outstanding progress because of the expertise and good quality support from highly skilled adults.
- Teaching is satisfactory and improving. There is some variation across the classes and subjects. In the best lessons, teachers assess pupils' work regularly to check on their progress and marking guides pupils effectively to help them to make the next steps in their learning. This good practice is not consistent across the school.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are typically considerate, polite and feel secure in the school's friendly atmosphere. This is apparent in their improving attendance. The curriculum provides interesting experiences which encourages pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils show a good understanding of how to keep safe.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is the leadership of teaching. Systems to assess accurately and to monitor pupils' progress have been implemented but the information is not used effectively to ensure that the needs of pupils of differing abilities are met fully. The impact of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating the school's work is improving although not all are fully effective in terms of driving improvements in teaching.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils make at least good progress and increase the proportion of pupils who attain nationally expected levels, especially in writing and mathematics by:
 - sharing best practice in teaching to ensure teaching is consistently good across the school
 - making better use of the school progress information to match activities to the abilities of all pupils
 - making certain that teachers' written guidance provides pupils with well defined steps for improvement.
- Increase the effectiveness of subject leaders by developing their skills in order to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress and the quality of teaching more effectively.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is satisfactory. The vast majority of parents and carers who expressed their view of the school feel their children make good progress. Inspectors found that pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points to reach average attainment overall by the end of Year 6. Pupils' progress is increasingly good as observed in some lessons. This is a result of improved teaching and more rigorous use of assessment information to assess pupils' attainment more accurately. Pupils' progress and attainment in writing and mathematics are catching up with those in reading. However, pupils' progress does vary across the school. In some lessons, progress slows, especially when the information about pupils' prior learning is used less effectively and activities do not match all pupils' abilities. This was apparent in a literacy lesson where pupils' prior knowledge on using the 'ough' sound led to misunderstandings. As a result of highly effective support and levels of expertise, pupils who are disabled or those who have a special educational need and particularly those pupils with a hearing impairment, make outstanding progress.

Children settle confidently and happily in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are cared for well and thrive in this positive environment. The school instils a clear sense of value, self-belief and a desire to learn. A variety of enjoyable activities, such as writing a list of items for Percy's Park, challenge children's thinking and fosters active learning. The 'My Letter Book' provides a comprehensive review of children's progress and is valued by parents and carers.

Pupils' reading skills in Years 1 and 2 are broadly average. Attainment has risen because of effective intervention to ensure that pupils learn to read. In lessons, pupils were keen to share their books and demonstrated enjoyment and reading stamina. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, their attainment in reading is broadly average. Pupils read with expression and confidently discuss books and what they like to read.

Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire considered that their children are well taught. Although there are examples of good teaching practice, teaching is satisfactory overall.

In the best lessons, teachers had high expectations and engaged pupils in interesting activities that were well matched to their abilities. Questioning was used effectively to assess pupils' understanding. Verbal feedback was used well to give improvement points and timescales were set for work to be completed. However, some inconsistencies in marking and feedback remain. Pupils do not always have the opportunity to respond to suggestions as to how to improve their work further and are not always given written guidance with well defined steps for improvement. The use of improved and agreed assessment systems are not used consistently to provide challenging, well matched activities across the school. There are still too few opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing and to use their mathematical skills in problem solving activities.

The curriculum has an increasingly sharp focus on basic skills and themes which pupils enjoy. In good lessons, teachers are creative in their planning of an imaginative curriculum and the opportunity for pupils to apply their skills in meaningful contexts. This was observed in a literacy lesson in the Year 1 class when pupils readily attempted to write their own poems, using clearly thought out adjectives to describe various artefacts. Teaching of pupils with a hearing impairment is outstanding and supports pupils' rapid progress at all levels enabling them to work within mainstream classes effectively.

Teachers effectively promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' positive attitudes to staff and willingness to learn collaboratively are strengths in their approach to a diverse society.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically good. Pupils report that they feel safe and enjoy school. The vast majority of parents and carers agree. Pupils say that the school addresses any instances of poor behaviour immediately. They have a good understanding of what constitutes different forms of bullying. For example, pupils do not tolerate racial harassment and this underpins their positive attitudes to the different cultures in their school community and the world around them. They say, 'We are all in this together. We are a team'. Pupils are very willing to take on responsibilities, such as members of the school council, house captains, buddies and monitors, acting as good role models for younger pupils. They are polite and considerate towards each other and adults. Provision for pupils with a hearing impairment in the school facilitates the inclusion of these pupils very effectively. As a result, they grow in confidence and are happy to take on responsibilities such as buddying younger children.

Pupils are aware of how the curriculum helps them to understand unsafe situations through, for example, visitors such as the police and fire service and courses such as e-safety. The school promotes attendance and punctuality well. Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual in arriving to their lessons.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision and a purposeful approach to driving school improvement. Monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders highlight the right priorities for improvement with clear action plans in place. While pupils' progress is improving, it does vary. This is because not all subject leaders have developed the skills of monitoring and evaluating. For example, systems for tracking pupils' progress and improving the quality of teaching have been implemented although the monitoring of the impact of such systems is not always rigorous enough. Professional development is increasing staff expertise, for example, in assessing pupils' attainment in writing. Leadership of teaching is satisfactory although there are not enough opportunities to share best practice to ensure consistently good teaching across the school. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

The school has a clear commitment to promoting equality of opportunities and tackling discrimination. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Governance is satisfactory. Members of the governing body are committed and provide a high level of support to the school. Their increasing links with subjects is ensuring they know what is needed to move the school forward.

A strength of the school is the range of effective partnerships to provide opportunities in sport and music and to support pupils who have a range of learning and emotional needs and their families. As a result, pupils are extremely well cared for and feel safe and happy. The school has a good partnership with parents and carers who feel pupils are well looked after and they are kept well informed of their children's progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory. There is a strong focus on developing the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. It is increasingly meeting the needs of all learners. The creative curriculum provides some memorable experiences for pupils, such as the sandcastle building competition, residential visits to an outdoor centre and musical performances. There are many extra-curricular clubs which promote learning and enjoyment in sports and the arts. Consequently, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

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 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.



16 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Simonside Primary School, Jarrow, NE32 4AU

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and appreciated the information you gave us.

You go to a satisfactory school that provides excellent care and supports you in your learning. We were very impressed with how much you knew about keeping safe and healthy. You willingly take on responsibilities such as members of the school council, house captains and monitors. You work hard to make your school the happy and safe place it is. We were particularly impressed by your good behaviour and the way you looked after each other. You clearly feel safe and happy.

You say you enjoy your lessons and that your teachers make learning 'fun'. We have asked your headteacher and other school leaders to help you to reach higher standards by making sure your teachers use information about your learning to plan lessons that help you make the best progress you can, particularly in your writing and mathematics. We have also asked that teachers make sure you know how to improve your work and help you take the next steps in your learning. We would like teachers to share their best practice to make certain that all your activities meet your needs and interests.

You can help by continuing to do your best. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gill Gleghorn
Lead inspector

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