

Choppington First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122180
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	380414
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Kitching
Headteacher	Hilda Blythe
Date of previous school inspection	23 April 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed four teachers and visited nine lessons. Discussions were held with members of staff, pupils, partners of the school and members of the governing body. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and the school's monitoring of pupils' work and progress, along with reports made about the school and various policies, including those referring to the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils. The inspection team scrutinised questionnaires returned by staff and pupils, along with 12 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Pupils' current work to determine whether the improved progress in reading and writing continues to result in improved attainment.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics in Key Stage 1 to determine whether teaching is equally effective in each key stage.
- Pupils' attendance to determine whether pupils develop satisfactory work place skills.
- The effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation by leaders and managers to determine the school's capacity to sustain the improvements made since the last inspection.

Information about the school

The school is smaller in size than other primary schools. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There have been a number of disruptions to staffing since the last inspection. This has now settled with all substantive staff back in post. In the two years following the last inspection, pupil mobility was high. Although still above average, this has reduced during the last school year. The school has been awarded Healthy School status.

The school site is shared by Choppington Sure Start Children's Centre. This provision will be the subject of a separate inspection and the report will appear on the Ofsted web site.

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. The school provides a safe, caring and supportive environment in which pupils achieve well and thrive emotionally and socially. A strong factor in the school's good improvement is the success of the headteacher in building a team of staff and members of the governing body who are working together well to move the school forward. Accurate self-evaluation and the shared vision and commitment of the whole-school community to achieve the very best education for pupils have effectively driven an agenda of improvement. Rigorous and effective systems for monitoring all aspects of the school's work by senior leaders have led to a number of significant improvements, not least in how the school is viewed by parents and carers. There has been rapid improvement in levels of attendance which are now in line with the national average. The school has a good capacity to sustain the improvements made and to improve further.

The majority of children enter the nursery with knowledge and skills well below those typical for three-year-old children. They get off to a good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage because their needs are met well. They settle in quickly and develop confidence and independence. This, together with the good level of care and support, helps pupils to enjoy school. The support provided for pupils whose circumstances are more vulnerable is especially good and contributes significantly to pupils' good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2, resulting in levels of attainment by the end of Year 4 which overall are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils' improved attendance, together with secure basic skills, ensures that they are satisfactorily prepared for their next stage of education.

The determination and commitment of the headteacher to improve the quality of provision, has resulted in good teaching and learning and a curriculum which is meaningful and relevant so that it enthuses and motivates pupils to do well. The school's success in engaging parents and carers in their children's learning has contributed to rapid progress in pupils' reading skills, which are currently higher than those in writing and mathematics. The recent introduction of a structured integrated approach to the teaching of reading and writing is working well and the gap between pupils' attainment in these elements of their literacy skills is beginning to close. Good professional development has helped to improve staff expertise in mathematics. As a result, the decline in pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been addressed. Teachers are increasingly helping pupils to understand how to use their knowledge to solve problems. However, this is not yet a consistently strong feature

of all lessons and is one reason why, although improving well, pupils' attainment in mathematics is not as high as that in reading.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise attainment, particularly in writing and mathematics by:
 - helping pupils to use their knowledge in mathematics to solve problems
 - teachers consistently using assessment information to provide appropriate challenge for pupils in all parts of lessons
 - using language that is accessible to all pupils when writing targets for improvement

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils develop into caring and friendly young people who make a positive contribution to their school and local community. They enjoy school and their achievement is good. Attainment has risen well over the past two years as has the rate of progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress due to early identification of their needs and the effective care and support they receive. Pupils read well because they have a good understanding of how to blend the sounds in words together to read those words which are unfamiliar to them. Daily sessions, in which pupils link together their reading and writing skills, are beginning to be used well to help pupils use the good knowledge which they have developed in reading to improve their attainment in writing. For example, they break down the sounds in words to improve the accuracy of their spelling and use the writing style of a variety of authors to improve how well their own writing engages the reader. Pupils' understanding of place value and the development of strategies to aid mental calculation is developing well in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, pupils are beginning to understand how to solve problems, but this is at an earlier stage of development.

Pupils have in the main responded exceptionally well to the wide range of initiatives introduced to improve their levels of attendance. The number of pupils with persistent absence has reduced considerably and attendance in the previous school year increased to the national average. This improvement has continued in the current school year with attendance in most year groups above average. Pupils' awareness of how to look after their health and safety is good and they develop a real sense of responsibility in ensuring their school is a safe place in which to learn and play. For example, the school council has been proactive in considering ways in which the behaviour of a small minority of pupils can be improved in the playground so that everyone feels safe and happy. Pupils' ability to reflect and question why things are a certain way supports their good spiritual development and helps them to explore different cultures and traditions. This in turn ensures they develop a better understanding of how to respect the similarities and differences in the people they encounter. As a result, lessons and play times are harmonious occasions and good behaviour is the norm.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	3
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	
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:	3
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good; there is a strong culture of reflection amongst all staff, who are keen to increase their skills. Through an effective partnership with a subject specialist, teachers have improved their subject knowledge in mathematics and have introduced a wide range of teaching and learning styles in order to effectively meet the wide variety of pupils' needs. As a result, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is improving. There is a consistent approach to important features, such as planning and marking of work, which supports pupils' progress well. Through accurate assessment of pupils' work and good quality questioning, teachers' have a secure knowledge of the ability of each pupil. This is reflected in teachers' effective planning for independent and group tasks which are well matched to the different ages and stages of learning of pupils in each class. Occasionally, in the parts of lessons which are directed by the teacher to the whole class, teachers' use of assessment is not as effective in ensuring that pupils of all abilities are challenged by their learning. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to learning, providing skilled explanations and support, most notably in the recently introduced structured reading and writing sessions.

Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is promoted through activities that interest them and in tasks where learning is made relevant to their own lives. For example, pupils in the Year 3/4 class were inspired in a science lesson regarding the use of energy, by the opportunity to test their hypothesis alongside a sustainability expert. Not only were pupils able to make good progress in their knowledge and understanding in science, but were also able to put their mathematical knowledge into practice and extend their understanding of the importance of preserving world resources. Through effective monitoring appropriate actions are taken to adjust curriculum provision to meet pupils' individual needs and to ensure that pupils' levels of attainment continue to improve. However, the integrated approach to curriculum planning, which is contributing to the improvement in pupils' literacy skills, is at an earlier stage of implementation in mathematics.

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The school is rigorous in the systems it employs to secure pupils' welfare and achievement. For example, catch-up activities are provided for those pupils who are absent for any length of time. A nurture class has been successfully created in which pupils who find learning difficult or whose circumstances makes them more vulnerable are supported in making good progress towards closing the gap between their attainment and that of their peers. Pupils in each class have a good understanding of the level at which they are working and are aware that staff monitor their progress towards their target. The use of this information as a means of helping pupils driving their own learning is to some extent negated by the use of language which is difficult for all pupils to access.

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?

Rigorous and comprehensive self-evaluation underpins good development planning. The progress of this is analysed especially well by the headteacher, ensuring that remaining weaknesses can be clearly identified and speedily addressed. Staff are willingly increasing the responsibility which they take to lead and manage new initiatives, although this has not yet extended to the regular monitoring of the impact of these initiatives in classrooms. The close attention paid to the needs, abilities and outcomes of different groups of pupils means they all have a good and equal opportunity to succeed. Harassment and discrimination are effectively tackled through detailed school policies which are fully implemented and regularly monitored.

The governing body is well informed and supportive, with their effective reports on school visits supporting and challenging the school well. The governing body is increasingly proactive in helping to direct the school's work and governors use their good skills in a range of areas such as their own teaching experience, safeguarding pupils and health and safety to good effect. Systems for safeguarding pupils follow national guidance and are rigorously and effectively implemented ensuring that the school is a secure place to be. An effective action plan is in place to promote community cohesion. Central to this plan is the school's work to engage parents and carers and the re-establishment of the school at the heart of a cohesive community. This has played a central part in raising pupils' attendance and improving attainment in reading. Partnerships with a range of other schools and agencies, especially those established through creative partnerships, support pupils' education and welfare well.

These are the grades for the 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

A caring and supportive atmosphere, in which good relationships are developed, helps children to settle well into nursery routines. Good teaching, including a strong focus on language and children’s personal and social skills contributes to children’s good progress across all areas of their learning. This is most notable in the work they do to learn the sounds in words and in the good activities provided to help the development of gross and fine motor skills. The accommodation is bright and welcoming and is well organised to focus on different areas of learning. It is effectively supervised so that there is an adult on hand to discuss things with children and extend their learning. A careful check is kept on children's progress to help plan for the next steps in learning. There is a good balance between activities led by an adult and those which children choose for themselves, although careful consideration is not always given as to the benefit to learning from following children’s own interests. The outdoor area provides good opportunities for physical development and for children to explore, investigate and solve problems.

Good attention is paid to children's welfare, with effective induction procedures in place. The provision is well led and managed, with good teamwork amongst all adults. There is close liaison with other phases of the school so that children benefit from good transition into Year 1. This is essential to children’s future learning as despite their good progress, by the time they enter Year 1, the attainment of most children remains below expectations.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account:	2
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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A smaller than average number of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. All responses to the questions asked were positive and there were very few additional concerns expressed. A very small number of parents and carers expressed concern regarding the relatively few activities provided for their children after school. Inspection evidence indicates that a number of activities have been offered, but that due to a poor response from pupils, have not been viable to

continue. Those offered by the school during lunch times are well attended. In a number of additional positive comments, parents and carers showed their appreciation for the staff's hard work, their good teaching and the care provided for their children. Inspection evidence supports parents and carers positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Choppington 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 inspector received 12 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 80 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	67	4	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	7	58	5	42	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	42	7	58	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	67	4	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	58	5	42	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)	5	42	7	58	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	58	5	42	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	75	3	25	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	58	5	42	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	7	58	5	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	7	58	5	42	0	0	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 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



01 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Choppington First School, Choppington, NE62 5RR

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed seeing how much you enjoy learning. I agree that you go to a good school and that the grown-ups take good care of you. It was good to hear how much you look forward to learning about new things. I was very pleased with how well most of you have improved your attendance. I have asked the school to make sure you fully understand how important this and how well you can do in the future.

The good teaching you receive is helping you to make good progress in your work particularly in how well you are able to read. I could see how much you are enjoying the new lessons with Fred, which are helping you to make good progress by linking your reading and writing skills together. Teachers carefully track your progress so that they can match the work they ask you to do to your needs. Occasionally, when you are all working together with the teacher, you are not all challenged to do as well as you can. I have, therefore, asked the school to improve this so that you continue to reach even higher attainment especially in your writing and mathematics. There are also a few other things which I have asked the school to improve to help with this, these are:

- to help you to understand how to solve problems
- to make sure that when teachers write your targets you can understand the words that they use

You can all help with this by always trying to do as well as you can and by continuing to come to school regularly and on time. I wish you all the very best for your future learning.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Buller
Lead inspector

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