



Red Hall Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114183
LEA Darlington
Inspection number 279329
Inspection dates 21 November 2005 to 22 November 2005
Reporting inspector Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Headingley Crescent, Darlington, County Durham, DL1 2ST
School category	Community		
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01325 254770
Number on roll	198	Fax number	01325 254773
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr J Morrison
Date of previous inspection	1 June 2000	Headteacher	Mr P Boddy

Age group 3 to 11	Inspection dates 21 November 2005 - 22 November 2005	Inspection number 279329
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors over a period of two days.

Description of the school

This is a medium sized primary school. In terms of social and economical deprivation it is recognised as the most disadvantaged school in Darlington. Over a half of all pupils are entitled to free school meals. There are 198 pupils. Most arrive with very little previous learning and at a very early stage of personal development. About a quarter of pupils have above average learning difficulties. There are very few pupils from a minority ethnic background.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with many outstanding features. This matches its self-evaluation. What makes it so good is that it changes pupils' lives by broadening their horizons. Most pupils arrive with a potentially bleak future but the excellent curriculum opens up many opportunities to expand their learning and experience many things that they would otherwise never encounter. Pupils' personal development is outstanding, as is the care and support they receive. From the day they arrive they thrive, growing in confidence and learning that there is a future to look forward to.

Children get off to an exceptionally good start in the Foundation Stage. From a very low start they make excellent progress because teaching is outstanding, but standards are below national expectations by the end of reception. School routines are quickly established and children are very well prepared for the move into Year 1. Through the rest of the school progress is good in nearly all subjects, although last year's test results in writing were disappointing. Teaching is good, with particular strengths in assessment, the building of strong relationships and the management of behaviour. Occasionally though, lessons lack sparkle and pace and there are limitations in teachers' awareness of how they can contribute to improving writing.

The headteacher is an exceptional leader and has been instrumental in maintaining identified strengths, chipping away at weaknesses to bring about steady improvement and cementing the school firmly at the centre of the community. The school gives outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

Focus on:

- improving pupils' writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that pupils make good progress. Except in writing, the school is meeting its targets. By the end of Year 2, from an exceptionally low starting point, over a half of all pupils are meeting national expectations in writing and mathematics and almost three quarters in reading. Last year's test results for reading and writing were the best for five years, and for mathematics, the best for three. This puts the school at the top of a group of broadly similar schools in Darlington. Test results at the end of Year 6 showed three quarters of pupils meeting national expectations overall. Over the last three years, pupils have achieved outstanding success in science. Last year 90 per-cent reached Level 4 or above. In mathematics, a two-year downward trend has been arrested and last year's results were the best for five years. Again, these results put the school at the top of a group of similar schools. About three quarters of pupils meet national expectations in reading but last year's results for writing were the worst for five years. The reasons for this have been quickly

identified, the improvement of writing has been made the main focus of school improvement and inspectors felt that there are already clear signs of improvement.

Other than in the Foundation Stage, where children make outstanding progress, no group of pupils is making significantly different progress to any other. Excellent assessment procedures quickly identify pupils who need extra support and the good help they receive helps them to meet their personal targets and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school meets with outstanding success here. Parents say their children love coming and there is a sense of joy about the school. The atmosphere is wonderful, smiles abound and pupils are polite and extremely well behaved. Pupils show a strong desire to learn and take great care with their work. An enormous sense of spirituality is helped by close links with local churches and a culture of celebration and reflection. The lack of damage to school property and the tiny number of serious incidents or accidents demonstrates how outstandingly well the school promotes moral and social values. Variety in cultures is explored in depth. Pupils are given tremendous help to ensure that they recognise potential danger and the climate of the school is one where bullying or harassment cannot flourish. There is an excellent level of participation in a wide range of physical activities and pupils are given enormous support to help them grow up fit and healthy. Initiatives such as 'Playground Pals' help pupils develop a sense of caring for and supporting others. Pupils are frequently involved in church events, entertaining locals and hosting charitable events. Representative pupils work with adults in the community to discuss how the local environment can be improved. Pupils' fast developing sense of responsibility and growing self-confidence are contributing strongly to their future economic well-being. Attendance is slightly below the national average, mainly because a few families insist on taking holidays in term time. The school actively discourages this but for many families it is a case of a cheap holiday or none at all and the school is sensitive to this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. This is a view shared by pupils, parents and the school. None of the teaching seen by inspectors was unsatisfactory and some was outstanding, for example in a reception class where a teacher with an excellent understanding of how young children learn helped them to use new words to describe different fruits. Teachers are making very good use of computers to help pupils learn. This was seen to particularly good effect in an English lesson where pupils were rearranging text and pictures to represent a newspaper article. The local education authority has used teachers' highly skilled management of pupil behaviour as an example to other schools. Teachers keep an outstandingly good check on pupils' progress and this helps to make

sure that they are properly challenged. Marking is usually accompanied by helpful comments to help pupils improve their work. Classroom assistants offer skilled help to pupils, often supporting those with learning or behaviour difficulties. A few teachers lack the confidence to be innovative in the planning and teaching of writing in lessons other than English. This is one of the reasons for last year's decline in writing. A lot of teaching can be best described as 'safe and solid'. It is effective, but more pace would not be out of place in some lessons. A bit more adventure could be added to a few lessons. A visiting teacher of French set an excellent example of how this can be done in a dynamic show of pupil involvement, enjoyment and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding, especially in the way that it is enriched through a wealth of exciting activities outside the classroom. These often contribute strongly to the local community, for example a tree planting exercise in nearby woodland or entertaining senior citizens to coffee in the school. A wealth of visits contributes successfully to pupils' achievement. Many visitors share their skills, beliefs and experiences during 'Rainbow Time'. The Foundation Stage curriculum is particularly impressive. Here, children experience an exciting variety of activities and acquire self-confidence and a strong desire to learn. An excellent programme of personal, health and social education contributes strongly to pupils' capacity to stay healthy and safe. All of the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and a careful balance is kept between promoting numeracy and literacy whilst ensuring that time for other subjects, which add huge variety and interest to pupils' learning, is not eroded. Since the shock of last year's writing results, a concerted effort has been made to identify ways in which these other subjects can contribute to the raising of standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care guidance and support are outstanding. Exceptional attention is paid to ensuring that pupils are well cared for in a safe environment. Child protection procedures are thorough and carefully observed and are due to be further strengthened by training for all staff. Risks are thoroughly assessed and there is a keen awareness of health and safety. As a result, accidents in school are virtually unheard of. The outstanding quality of assessment ensures that pupils experiencing difficulty in their learning are quickly identified and allows staff to offer precisely aimed support and guidance to all pupils in their learning. Parents are carefully listened to, and the views of pupils, for instance about school dinners and playground equipment, have been taken on board with the result of improvement in both. There are excellent procedures for ensuring that newly arriving children settle quickly into school routines.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are as good as claimed. The headteacher's outstanding leadership has been instrumental in a relentless drive to raise standards and to create a school that is widely respected in all corners of the community. The school has been described as 'a haven' (HMI) and 'of central importance to the community' (Rt. Hon. A. Milburn MP).

Self-evaluation is good. The views of pupils and parents are taken into good account. Teaching in particular is exceptionally carefully monitored. This is precisely focused on clearly identified priorities for improvement. Last year these included teachers' reading files. The checks were thorough and suitably critical. Possible improvements were suggested to each teacher and subsequent monitoring at two-monthly intervals ensured that suggestions for improvement were being observed. Last year, 71 percent of Key Stage 1 pupils met or exceeded national expectations compared with 33 per cent the year before. This year, the focus has switched to improving pupils' writing. There is, however, a reluctance by a few teachers to follow the advice given to them by senior managers.

Finance is carefully managed. The school has been careful to match a fall in pupil numbers with a respective reduction in staffing. Money has been very well spent on lap-top computers and this has led to huge improvements in information and communication technology. Governors take a keen interest in the school, are frequent visitors and offer support and challenge equally. The school is well placed to face the challenge of pupils' declining attainment on entry and to continue improving.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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24 November 2005

Dear Pupils,

Well, well, well, what a joy it was to visit your school the other day. You may remember us (the old man and woman in the Rainbow Room) who kept popping into your lessons and talking to you about your work. It was very important to hear what you had to say and we thought you were extremely polite and kind to us.

We came to see how well you were getting on and if there were any suggestions we could make to help the school improve. The truth is that it's such a good school that we couldn't think of much that needed it.

The good bits:

you are a credit to the school; polite, well behaved and hard working

the school provides you with masses of opportunities to discover that learning takes place out of the classroom as well as in it

you're safe and well looked after

you are being well taught and are making good progress

you have an outstanding headteacher, listen to him and you won't go far wrong.

Things that need to be improved:

your writing. Last year's results came as an unpleasant surprise. Please, work hard, listen to your teachers and take extra care.

All the best

Alastair Younger (Lead inspector)

Annex B