



Choppington First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122180
LEA Northumberland
Inspection number 281178
Inspection dates 26 January 2006 to 27 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Scott

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

Type of school	First	School address	Eastgate
School category	Community		Choppington
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		Northumberland, NE62 5RR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01670 823 197
Number on roll	70	Fax number	01670 826 083
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Rev Jeremy Thompson
Date of previous inspection	1 September 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Jane Ramsey

Age group 3 to 9	Inspection dates 26 January 2006 - 27 January 2006	Inspection number 281178
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

The school lies in a small ex-mining community in Northumberland. It is an area with some significant social and economic deprivation and the movement of population is slightly higher than average. Nearly all pupils are from white British families and there are currently two traveller pupils. There is a higher than average percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

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 strengths. Inspection findings match the school's view of itself, particularly because pupils clearly achieve well. In the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes), provision is good and children make good progress, although they do not reach most of the goals expected of them. By Year 4, pupils reach average standards in all of the main subjects. Pupils' obvious appreciation of their school is seen in their good behaviour and healthy attitudes to work. Teaching and learning are good in all classes, because teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations. However, pupils do not always have enough scope to work independently.

Pupils' learning is reinforced by a good curriculum. Although this has some exciting aspects, teachers could do more to make lessons more stimulating and better linked with other subjects. Pastoral care is outstanding. Individual concerns are skilfully managed so that pupils' behaviour and attitudes improve dramatically during their time at school. Support and guidance are good, and pupils are well aware how they can improve in their work.

The strong, thoughtful leadership of the headteacher means that the school has a good understanding of its strengths and the right priorities for improvement. However, these are not always linked clearly to pupils' achievement. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and is well set to improve further. As a result, it provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils' learning is enriched by a more diverse and stimulating curriculum.
- Provide more scope for pupils to develop skills in independent learning.
- Ensure that all aspects of the school's development are more clearly linked to pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress by the time they leave the school. The school sets challenging and appropriate targets that motivate pupils to improve. Children enter nursery below average in ability and are especially weak in their physical and creative skills, as well as their awareness of the outside world. They achieve well by the end of the reception year, notably in language, yet still fall short of most of the goals expected of them.

By Year 2, pupils also achieve well. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have shown a steady improvement since 2003 and they are now broadly average for their age. By Year 4, pupils continue to achieve well. Although standards in English, mathematics and science are also average, this year's pupils have made good progress since they were in Year 2, when their standards were below average. Standards in

information and communication technology are average throughout the school and this is a distinct improvement since the previous inspection.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well, because of precise individual targets and effective support in the classroom. Traveller pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils, because their poor attendance does not ensure enough continuity in their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils think their school is great. This is clear from their positive attitudes in lessons, obvious respect for their teachers and because they cannot think of any way of improving it. Around the school, pupils are chatty and polite, and get on very well with one another. Pupils rightly say that behaviour is very good and that there is virtually no bullying. Nevertheless, attendance is low and has been for some time, despite the school's best efforts.

Pupils are responsible individuals. They encourage one another to work hard in lessons and older pupils look after younger children well as in paired reading sessions, for example. The school is well-respected within the community and pupils benefit from activities like performances for senior citizens. Pupils develop well culturally, especially through art, and are beginning to appreciate the diversity of multi-cultural Britain through visits and study. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Pupils are well aware of the benefits of a healthy diet and adequate exercise. They are sensitive to their own personal safety and that of others in their play and movement around the school. Their good social skills and competency in literacy and numeracy mean that they are well prepared for their next school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Teachers are adept at creating a happy and positive atmosphere in lessons, through their own energy and confidence in their subjects. They are good at explaining new concepts, like different methods of subtraction, and encourage pupils to play a full part in lessons by clearly valuing their contributions.

Teachers are good role models and have high expectations of pupils. This is well illustrated by the consistently neat and careful work in pupils' books. Pupils are right to feel that teachers and teaching assistants provide good advice. Informal comments in lessons, coupled with good marking in books and clear targets for improvement, mean that pupils have a good idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Through regular and thorough assessment, teachers set work that is mostly well matched to pupils' abilities. At times, though, teachers provide very similar work for pupils of different abilities. In addition, teachers sometimes do too much for their pupils. In subjects like history and science, pupils do have some good opportunities to learn for themselves, researching facts on the Internet or carrying out investigations. However, teachers tend to provide information for pupils rather than encouraging independent activity.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils receive a good curriculum that enables them to achieve well. Teachers ensure that lessons highlight key aspects of literacy and numeracy, so that basic skills are learned progressively. Increasingly, teachers are linking subjects to put learning in context, particularly in the Year 3/4 class. In one lesson, for instance, a group of pupils practised letter writing by e-mailing a letter to someone in India. Pupils broaden their experiences through visits and a weekly enrichment session, that includes clog-dancing, for instance.

There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties. Teachers produce sharply focused plans for learning that specify concerns and how they should be addressed. Support in lessons is good. Teaching assistants are adept at putting pupils at their ease and at encouraging thoughtful responses.

The buildings are spacious and well used. Bright informative displays, such as the art gallery in the Foundation Stage, motivate pupils. The school recognises the need to improve the outdoor play area for children in the Foundation Stage.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The inspector judges overall care, support and guidance to be good, and not outstanding as the school believes. However, the pastoral care for pupils is outstanding. There are thorough systems to safeguard pupils, such as the scrupulous vetting of all adults connected with the school. Families with specific problems have been helped considerably to ensure that their children can get the most out of school. The headteacher and staff work extremely hard to ensure that pupils' behaviour is as good as it is. As a result, pupils and parents are very appreciative.

Pupils are well supported in all that they do. Teachers are interested in what pupils have to say and use praise adeptly to encourage participation. There are good systems for checking the progress of pupils, which help teachers to plan lessons. Pupils' individual targets are clear, challenging but realistic. However, teachers do not routinely set new targets as soon as original ones are achieved.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The decisive and sensitive leadership of the headteacher ensures that the school is prospering and in a good position to improve further. She has raised the aspirations of staff and pupils, and increased the level of care. She has succeeded in strengthening teaching and learning through professional training and support, which now includes all staff. Senior teachers rightly feel more capable of playing a significant part in the school's development.

The school knows itself well. There are regular analyses of its progress that accurately pinpoint strengths and weaknesses. Teaching is monitored, for example, as well as pupils' work and test results. Action plans for improvement are sensible but they are rarely linked directly to pupils' achievement. This is also true of evaluations of teaching.

Governance is satisfactory. The chair of governors works well with the headteacher and provides valuable support to the school. Governors have a good overview of the school and have useful links with subjects. However, they recognise that they need to be more involved in the school's development and analysis of its progress.

The school is very receptive to the views of parents. Following a recent survey, the headteacher responded to each of the points raised, however minor. It is no surprise, therefore, that parents were unanimous in their praise for the school in their questionnaires. The school has made good progress since the last inspection, and has addressed the key issues well. The school is in good financial shape, it is well resourced and morale is high among staff. All this augurs well for the future.

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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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	2	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	3	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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Mrs Jane Ramsey

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30 January 2006

Dear Children

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to your school, and meeting you and your teachers. Thank you very much for all your comments and help around the school. Like you, I believe that yours is a good school because:

you obviously enjoy your work and respect your teachers

you work hard and do well in your lessons; the neatness of your books was a delight to see you become kind and well-behaved individuals

your teachers make learning enjoyable and expect you to work hard

the adults in the school take excellent care of you and make sure you are healthy and safe

your headteacher has improved your school a great deal and made it a happy and successful place.

However, your school could be better if:

lessons are more interesting, to help you gain a wider experience of the world

teachers give you more chance to learn by finding things out for yourselves

everything the school does is clearly planned to help your progress.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Additional Inspector