

Fellgate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108706
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	288161
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheila Mawer

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 on roll	192
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Dominic McIntyre
Headteacher	Miss Carol Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2002
School address	Oxford Way Durham Drive Fellgate Estate Jarrow Tyne and Wear NE32 4XA
Telephone number	0191 489 4801
Fax number	0191 483 7109

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average school. The area served is relatively disadvantaged, which is reflected in the higher than average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. There is an attached unit for 30 pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. As this makes up 16% of the school, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is almost twice the national average. Nearly all pupils are from White British families and there are a small number of looked after children. Attainment on entry to the school is below average. A higher than average percentage of pupils join or leave the school at times other than on entry to the Reception class and transfer in Year 6. The headteacher was appointed in September 2006. There have been seven changes of leadership in seven years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education and is improving rapidly. It has been through a difficult period when standards fell and pupils were not achieving well enough. This was due to the instability caused by frequent changes of leadership. The school is working effectively to rectify these weaknesses under the successful and determined leadership of a new headteacher. Leaders at all levels, including a fully committed governing body, have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. They have critically analysed the school's provision and are taking appropriate action to improve areas of weakness, particularly focusing their attention on raising standards and achievement. Issues from the last inspection are being addressed successfully. Curriculum provision has been strengthened through satisfactory links with other providers. Older pupils, for example, are enjoying the opportunity to learn French with a teacher from the local high school. Many new initiatives in the school improvement plan are helping pupils to catch up and learn at a better rate. With this clear vision and a good capacity for continued improvements, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

Standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. Taking account of pupils' starting points; this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. There is clear evidence to show that standards are rising, especially in the infant classes. While progress is satisfactory overall for all groups of pupils in the mainstream school, there is a legacy of underachievement, particularly in mathematics and writing. In the mainstream school, the teaching is satisfactory and improving, but it is not yet consistently good enough to make up lost ground. Some higher ability pupils, for example, are not always fulfilling their potential because the work they are given is not sufficiently challenging. Although marking is very helpful for pupils in the Foundation Stage and the Autistic Unit, it is weaker in the rest of the school. Children achieve well in the Foundation Stage and the teaching is good because staff organise a good balance of enjoyable, adult led and play-based activities which accelerate the learning. The Autistic Unit is a strength of the school and contributes very well to its overall effectiveness. Teaching here is good and pupils achieve well through high levels of effective support and successful planning. As one member of staff said, 'We seek to maximise the potential of all our children.'

Parents and pupils appreciate the good levels of pastoral care and support that pupils receive whenever they join the school. This is a major factor in pupils' enjoyment of school and their strong desire to work hard and attend regularly. They behave well and feel safe and happy in the very good relationships between staff and pupils. The school council is very proud of its contributions to school improvements. By the time pupils leave the school, they have developed caring and responsible attitudes towards others. This together, with their good awareness of healthy living, is preparing them well for the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement, especially in mathematics and writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to a consistently good level by providing a better level of challenge for higher ability pupils.
- Make sure all teachers give good guidance to their pupils, through marking, to help them improve their work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average and achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the Foundation Stage with weaker skills than normally found for children of this age, particularly in their spoken language and aspects of personal development. Imaginative activities and good teaching enable them to make good progress. Most reach the goals expected of five-year-olds. In 2005 and 2006, standards declined in the rest of the mainstream school. In 2006, at the end of Year 2, pupils reached standards that were below average. By Year 6, the standards were significantly below average in English, mathematics and science. Targets set by the school were not reached. Too many pupils made insufficient progress, including looked after children and particularly those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who joined the school in the junior classes.

The new headteacher is quickly reversing the decline in standards. Significant improvements in teaching and learning have been made so that pupils are now making satisfactory progress. Reliable school data and inspection evidence shows that the current standards in Year 2 are broadly average, while in Year 6 they are below average. Stronger teaching is leading to accelerated progress for a good proportion of pupils so that the Year 6 targets for 2007 are likely to be met in science and reading. Mathematics and writing are still a focus for development as standards are not high enough yet, particularly for higher ability pupils in the junior classes. The standards for pupils with autism in the unit are sometimes low, but these pupils have maintained good and sometimes very good progress over several years. Unlike the mainstream school, where significant changes in leadership have had a negative impact on standards and achievement, staffing levels in the unit have remained stable. Given the complexities of these pupils' learning needs and their starting points, they achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy being at Fellgate and this is clearly seen in their good attendance and enthusiasm for learning, which contribute well to their progress. As one pupil said, 'Learning is fun because teachers listen to us and have a good sense of humour.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and demonstrated well through pupils' strong respect and support for each other. They all get on extremely well together and welcome new pupils warmly. Behaviour is consistently good and bullying hardly ever happens; pupils report that it is dealt with effectively when it does occur. Pupils in the unit are quick to take frequent opportunities to be responsible and make informed choices. Lunchtime for these pupils is a very positive social experience. All pupils know how to stay safe in and out of school and are careful about the safety of others. They learn quickly about healthy eating and appreciate the full range of opportunities for vigorous activity. They are keen to contribute to the life of the school as playground friends and monitors. The school council, through their fundraising events, have added a bicycle rack and 'trim trail' to the good outdoor facilities for keeping fit. Although standards in acquiring the basic skills of literacy and numeracy do not yet match the school's aspirations, pupils build well for their future in the strength and maturity of their personal qualities and particularly in their relationships.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. Nearly all lessons seen during the inspection were good, which demonstrates that improvements have recently been made in developing teachers' skills. The improved systems for tracking pupils' progress are generally helping teachers to plan more effectively. However, these initiatives are new and not fully embedded throughout the school. In particular, the work in pupils' books shows that assessment information is not yet used well enough to raise the level of challenge and increase the progress of higher ability pupils. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but comments do not always give sufficient advice on how it could be improved.

Pupils' attentiveness and keenness to learn are marked features of all lessons. Relationships are very good and while pupils listen carefully to the teacher, they sometimes find it hard to listen to each other. A lot of strategies such as 'talking partners' and 'hot seating' are being used to improve pupils' listening skills. Lessons are taught at a good pace and subject knowledge is secure. The extensive use of computer technology makes the learning fun and more meaningful. Explanations from teachers are backed up with good questioning skills, which help pupils to think hard most of the time. Skilled teaching assistants encourage and support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to contribute to lessons and give of their best.

Good teaching in the Foundation Stage leads to good progress. Assessment information is used well to plan tasks that extend the children's knowledge and understanding in a meaningful way. Teaching in the unit is consistently effective; enabling pupils with quite profound learning needs to make good progress. Staff have a very clear view of how well individuals can do and they work effectively to maximise their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets national requirements and provides a good balance that enhances academic, physical and personal development. The curriculum is under review to find more efficient links between subjects so that pupils can see the relevance of their learning. A good example of where this is happening is in the Foundation Stage where activities are often planned to address a number of different areas of learning. Visits and visitors make a valuable contribution to school life. This is further enhanced by a satisfactory range of activities, provided out of school hours, of which pupils take full advantage. The school is particularly successful in ensuring that all groups of pupils are included in everything the school provides. The staff in the unit place a great emphasis on equipping pupils with the skills to live as well as learn.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for and all requirements are met in respect of their safeguarding. Risk assessments are carried out thoroughly. Child protection requirements, including arrangements for looked after children, are met. Partnerships with outside agencies underpin the exemplary support provided for pupils in the unit and the good support for all other pupils in the school. This results in a positive ethos within which highly committed staff value each pupil as an

individual. Attendance and behavioural incidents are carefully monitored and any concerns are dealt with well.

The tracking of pupils' attainment and progress in the unit and the Foundation Stage is very precise and supportive of their learning needs. In the rest of the school, new systems provide a clear picture of standards and the progress being made. Staff are still coming to terms with how this information can be used to set targets and help pupils to know how well they are doing. Very close and supportive links are maintained with parents, especially those with children in the unit. They are well informed about the progress their children are making.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has faced many challenges since taking up the post less than a year ago. With considerable experience and vision she has acted robustly to raise staff morale, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. She has helped subject leaders to be more successful in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and assessing its impact on standards. The inspirational unit leader is working very closely with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to drive the school forward in the right direction. Leaders have an honest and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Whilst they acknowledge the clear signs of improvement, they are acutely aware of where underachievement still needs to be addressed. Parents are very appreciative of the positive ethos in the school and the difference it makes to their children's lives. One commented, 'Staff are totally committed to the pupils and every child is treated as an individual. My son is flourishing in the Autistic Unit and every means are used to make his life better.'

The monitoring of teaching and learning is leading to better teaching and the excellent school improvement plan has been effective in making a number of significant improvements to the provision. For example, a wise decision was made to allocate additional funding to support groups of underachieving pupils in English. This has been fully justified in the rising standards and better progress.

Most governors are new to their roles but are keen to be involved in the school. Through links with subject leaders they have a better understanding of how well pupils are learning. Recent training is enabling them to begin monitoring and evaluating the work of the school with greater rigour so they can hold it more effectively to account.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fellgate Primary School, Tyne and Wear, NE32 4XA

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and helping us to find out about the things you do. We enjoyed our visit to Fellgate and appreciated the time you gave to talk to us in lessons and around the school. Mr Cooper was especially grateful for all the information he received from the school council. We think that yours is a satisfactory school at the moment, but it is quickly getting better because of all the improvements that have been made in the past year.

Here are the things we think are best about your school.

- How well the pupils achieve in the Autistic Unit and in the Reception class and how the rest of you in the school are getting much better in your learning and making more progress.
- The many good lessons.
- The good care and support you receive from all the staff.
- How well you all get on together, behave well and know how to keep healthy, safe and fit.
- That the headteacher, staff and governors are being successful in making this a better school.

We have asked the school to help some of you to reach higher standards, particularly those who can tackle harder tasks. In particular, we think most of you could do better in mathematics and writing. We hope that you will help your teachers to make your learning better by always working hard and doing your best. We saw that your work in books is always marked, but we think that some of your teachers could write more about how to improve your work, as this will help you to make more progress.

Thank you again for all your help and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Mawer

Lead Inspector