



Ouston Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114013
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289778
Inspection date 28 February 2007
Reporting inspector Sue Hatton HMI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Arisaig
School category	Community		Ouston, Chester le Street
Age range of pupils	7-11		County Durham, DH2 1RQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 4102599
Number on roll (school)	158	Fax number	0191 4102599
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Ian Tennant
		Headteacher	Mr Brian Lowes
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ouston Junior School is a smaller than average junior school. The number on roll has been falling steadily for the past few years. Almost all pupils come from White British families. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is small. There are proportionately fewer pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities than in many schools. The school has achieved the Active Mark and the Healthy Schools award.

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. Aspects of pupils' personal development and well-being and their participation in the wide range of enrichment activities provided by the school are outstanding. Parents are very supportive of the school. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education both academically and personally.

Pupils really enjoy coming to Ouston Junior School and attendance levels are very high. Their behaviour in and around the school is excellent. In lessons pupils are attentive and keen to contribute ideas and suggestions. They respond positively when teachers challenge them to think hard and use their imagination. They show pride in their achievements and work productively in groups, pairs or as individuals. As they move through the school, pupils become increasingly confident and mature. They develop the ability to express their opinions clearly and to respect the views of others. Older pupils readily take on a wide range of responsibilities and are keen to look after younger pupils or those experiencing difficulty.

Pupils enter the school with standards that are slightly above average and make good progress. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities make similarly good progress and the school ensures that they participate fully in the life of the school. Despite a slight dip in 2006, the proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the standards expected of 11 year olds is consistently above average.

Good teaching makes a significant contribution to the standards reached by pupils and the progress they make both in their learning and in their personal development. Teaching assistants and support staff are very well deployed to support learning and use their particular skills and expertise for the benefit of pupils. Teachers are well prepared and have clear learning intentions which they communicate well to pupils. In some classes these objectives are used very effectively to help pupils to evaluate their own work. However, the marking of pupils' work does not always provide them with precise guidance about what they need to do to improve further.

The range of additional activities and out-of-school clubs is a strength of the school and promotes the personal and social development of pupils. Participation rates are very high. The range of sporting and physical activities is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to pupils' understanding of the need for exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are given regular opportunities to develop interpersonal and life skills and to understand the contribution they can make to society. However, in their everyday lives pupils have limited opportunities to learn about people from different cultural backgrounds. The curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunities to compensate for this.

The positive impact of leadership and management can be seen in the standards reached by pupils, the progress they make in their learning and, particularly, in their personal development. The school's evaluation of its performance is on the whole accurate and its capacity for further improvement is good. It recognises its strengths and has a good track record of identifying areas for development and bringing about improvement. Recent improvements in the quality of pupils' writing are an example

of this. It has identified the need to improve the rate of progress for a minority of more able pupils. However, it has not yet taken sufficient action to bring about this improvement or put in place rigorous strategies to monitor and evaluate progress in this area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Put in place the actions needed to improve the progress of a minority of more able children and monitor and evaluate the impact of these actions.
- Ensure that all pupils have a clear and specific understanding of what they must do to improve their work.
- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the diversity of British society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Between 2001 and 2005 pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 reached standards that were significantly and consistently above national averages. The slight dip in standards in 2006 was of no educational significance.

The majority of pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make similarly good progress. Those who enter the school with standards that are above the expected level maintain these high standards. The school has identified the need to improve the progress of a minority of more able pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are good and their cultural development is satisfactory.

Pupils report that they feel safe in school. Very few are aware of any bullying taking place and those that are report that it was dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils are developing a sense of responsibility for others less fortunate than themselves. They are active fundraisers for the school and for national charities. Members of the school council are increasingly involved in the running of the school. They explored the costs and made decisions about apparatus for the development of a 'Trim trail' in the grounds of the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. This is demonstrated by the high standards reached by pupils and by the progress that they make.

The best teaching is lively, interesting and challenges pupils' thinking. Pupils become engrossed in their learning and persevere to meet their teachers' high expectations. The occasional withdrawal of groups of lower attaining pupils from these lessons means that they do not benefit as often as others from such good teaching.

Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well and are usually able to provide the right level of support or challenge to ensure that they make progress in lessons. However, occasionally tasks are not sufficiently well matched to meet the needs of pupils of all levels of capability.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad, relevant and interesting curriculum that meets the needs and interests of pupils. The curriculum is under review continuously and this resulted recently in the introduction of French throughout the school.

The curriculum is enriched by visits to local places of interest and by visitors but there are not enough opportunities to promote pupils' cultural development. Older pupils recall with obvious enjoyment their residential visits to Ford Castle and Middleton-in-Teesdale. For others the opportunity to sing in Durham Cathedral or compete as members of a local quiz team is equally memorable. The school is rightly proud of pupils' achievements in local and national sporting competitions. However, it is careful to emphasise the importance of taking part as well as winning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Good quality care ensures pupils' health and safety, and contributes to their feelings of security and levels of enjoyment. The support and guidance provided for pupils' personal development are very effective. The school safeguards pupils carefully and the required procedures are in place.

The school provides a supportive environment in which pupils achieve high standards and develop positive attitudes to their work. Most reach challenging targets. In some classes, pupils are developing the ability to judge how well they are doing for themselves. The quality and effectiveness of marking are not consistent. Where marking is good, it provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school's favourable reputation in the local community is well deserved. Leaders have created a common sense of purpose among staff and an ethos that promotes high standards of education and care. The school runs efficiently on a day-to-day basis and resources such as the newly created computer suite are used well.

Governors are supportive of the school. They are currently taking effective steps to maintain the smooth and efficient running of the school during a period of change to the senior leadership of the school.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2

The quality of provision

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

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

Ouston Junior School

Arisaig

Ouston

Chester le Street

County Durham

DH2 1RQ

28 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed the time I spent with you very much. You helped me to understand how your school works and why it is such a good school.

I could see that you really enjoy coming to school. You work hard and reach high standards. You behave well and are friendly and helpful to each other. The adults in your school work hard to make sure that you enjoy your lessons and make good progress. They also make sure that you have plenty of out-of-school activities and school clubs. Most of you take part in these. In particular you have lots of opportunities to take part in sport and physical activities that help to keep you healthy. I enjoyed hearing about your visits to Ford Castle and Middleton-in-Teesdale and about the choir singing in Durham Cathedral.

I have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to:

- think about ways to make sure that all of you make the most progress that you can in your learning
- make sure that you know what you need to do to improve your work; and
- find ways in which you can meet and learn about people from different cultural backgrounds.

With very best wishes for your future!

Yours sincerely

Sue Hatton

Her Majesty's Inspector