



Wolsingham Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114068
Local Authority Durham
Inspection number 289799
Inspection dates 3–4 October 2006
Reporting inspector Keith Oglesby

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Upper Town
School category	Community		Wolsingham, Bishop Auckland
Age range of pupils	3–11		County Durham, DL13 3ET
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01388 527457
Number on roll (school)	210	Fax number	01388 529072
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr John Moran
		Headteacher	Mr Howard Underwood
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 3–4 October 2006	Inspection number 289799
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves the small rural town of Wolsingham in Weardale. Most pupils live in the town or nearby, but almost one third travels from other villages up to 10 miles away. Twenty children attend the nursery class. Standards on entry to the school are broadly average. There are no pupils learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The school has gone through a period of many staff changes, but there is now a stable teaching team. The school has been awarded the Activemark twice.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Wolsingham is a good school, which gives good value for money. It has come a long way since the last inspection, which is when the present headteacher arrived. Significantly, there is now a stable and united teaching team. Staff are working together very well to ensure that children make the most of their primary years. The school provides good quality care, guidance and support. Consequently, children say they love coming to school, feel safe and looked after and have no fears at all about coping with their next school. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Children become responsible and confident young adults, sensitive to other people's feelings or beliefs. One boy said, 'We learn how to make good choices.' They clearly do this in the way they get along together, the way they behave and their positive ideas on living healthy, safe and active lives. The older children have lots of chances to make suggestions, which they know are listened to, and so make a difference. The good curriculum is enriched by many clubs, visits, visitors, business enterprises and events in the wider community. This ensures that pupils develop a good understanding of their place in the community and prepares them well for their future economic well-being.

Teaching and learning are good and the pupils listen carefully and do their best. Consequently, achievement is good for pupils of all abilities. They make a very good start in the Foundation Stage, where teaching and provision in the Nursery are excellent. By Year 6, standards are above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more able children make good progress from their starting points. In the provisional test results for 2006, which were a big improvement on recent years, almost half of the pupils in Year 6 reached higher levels than expected for their age in English, mathematics and science.

The school's own records show that progress has been less secure in previous years. This was due to some weaknesses in teaching, difficulties in appointing and keeping staff, and the fact that some improvements needed time to make an impact on standards. The great majority of parents are very happy with what the school provides. A few parents have concerns about varying rates of progress in different classes and the level of challenge for the more able children. The school has recognised this and there is now outstanding extra support for the more able children and effective steps for keeping a closer eye on teaching and learning. Consequently standards are rising. The good quality data on pupils' progress is beginning to be analysed more rigorously to see where learning is slowing.

Leadership and management at all levels are good. The headteacher has been exceptionally effective in building a strong united team who share a clear sense of direction. School leaders have an increasingly accurate view of the school. The governors have had several changes recently but the effective new team are well informed and involved in many aspects of the school's life. The school is in a good position to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the good quality data on pupils' standards and progress more effectively to give school leaders a clearer long-term view of each child's potential.
- Plan lessons that make sure that all pupils build on what they already know and can do.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils are achieving well, reaching above average standards by Year 6. They enter the Nursery with a wide range of abilities and standards in all areas of learning are typical for their age. In the national tests for eleven-year-olds, standards have stayed slightly above average for the last four years. The provisional results for 2006 show that the school has achieved its best ever standards in all subjects and has exceeded its own targets for the more able pupils. The work seen during the inspection confirms this good progress. The improving trend is mainly due to good leadership and a more stable teaching team.

Pupils of all abilities are doing well because they work hard and the teaching is good. They make a very good start in the Nursery, where the teaching is excellent. By the end of Reception nearly all children reach the goals expected for this age. Standards by Year 2 vary from year to year because cohorts are quite small, but they have generally stayed close to the national average and sometimes above it in reading. The school's data shows that progress has not been consistent across all classes in recent years. This was mainly due to difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers. However, the present team are working together very well to improve learning and push up standards. Progress in science and information and communication technology (ICT) has been particularly good. Writing has been a weaker subject in the past, but standards are now above average. This is partly because the school has successfully inspired the boys, who now achieve as well as the girls. There is effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities and for the more able pupils. Both of these groups are achieving well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress in developing their personal skills. They grow into mature and thoughtful young people who are a pleasure to spend time with. They love coming to school and make the most of all that it offers. Parents appreciate this. One wrote, 'My child would come on Saturdays and Sundays.' Attendance is above average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils' behaviour in lessons, and outside, demonstrates respect for each other and for adults. They say that there is almost no bullying, and in any case 'the teachers are really good at sorting it out.' Pupils understand the importance of a healthy and safe lifestyle, the school cook works closely with pupils to promote good eating habits. There are plenty of

opportunities to enjoy physical exercise, both in school and through links with local organisations.

Pupils willingly take on responsibilities. Through the school council and the buddy system, they play an active part in consulting and making decisions. Pupils make a positive contribution to the local community. For example, they plan, shop and organise the monthly lunches for older residents. They have been involved in campaigns for the improvement of local amenities and enrich village life with regular productions.

The school prepares its pupils very well for later life because they learn to make good choices, develop very good social skills and have very good attitudes towards other points of view and cultures. They have a taste for business enterprise, use technology confidently and have high standards in English and mathematics.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The older pupils say that teachers seem to enjoy what they do and work very hard to help all of them. They think they make lessons interesting and explain things clearly and patiently. The inspection team agrees with them; teaching and learning are good. Because of this, pupils work hard and make good progress. A strength is the evident teamwork amongst all adults. The school's priorities for improvement are seen as everybody's concern. Both the teaching in the Nursery and in the support given to the more able pupils are outstanding, resulting in good progress. Strengths in all parts of the school include:

- the ability to enthuse and motivate classes
- high quality support for pupils who are struggling; teachers are good at building self-esteem
- a strong team of teaching assistants who make a significant contribution to learning
- careful planning, which usually sets work at the right level for each group.

A weakness in some lessons is that teachers miss chances to ensure that all pupils build on what they already know. Occasionally teachers spend too much time explaining what some pupils already understand.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets all requirements and provides pupils with a good range of experiences in lessons and out of school. The Nursery curriculum is excellent both indoors and in the outdoor area. Children's excellent start in their personal development provides a very good start to the school's effective programme for personal, social and health education. There is a good emphasis on basic skills, and teachers work hard to make this work relevant to the pupils' interests and experiences. Because of staff changes, leadership in literacy has not yet had the impact on the

curriculum seen in some other subjects, but the new team is already beginning to have an impact on raising standards. The broad programme for physical education has been recognised by two 'Activemark' awards. The creative curriculum is beginning to benefit from the 'Raising Standards through Creativity' project. For example, recent work in local history and geography has involved governors, local residents and environmental experts sharing their knowledge. Many other visitors and events out of school enrich the curriculum, including a residential trip to France. Good links with other schools bring expertise in French, dance and sport. There is a good range of popular clubs. These features extend pupils' personal development very well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils is good. Systems are in place to ensure that pupils learn in an atmosphere where they feel safe and secure. Child protection and risk assessment routines are well known to staff and the school is following the government recommended procedures for safeguarding pupils. Guidance provided to pupils for their personal development is excellent. For example, the 'Tree Project' has had a significant impact on the ways in which pupils take personal responsibility. As one pupil said, 'I am now a much more organised person and that has helped me to improve my work.' Support and guidance for pupils' academic standards are also good with some outstanding features. The deputy headteacher sets an excellent example in the support systems which she uses to improve the standards of higher attaining pupils. They know clearly how they are doing, what makes it good or otherwise, and what they need to do next. This level of support is not yet consistent in all other classes and as a result a small number of pupils do not always make as much progress as they could.

Document reference number: HMI 2507 01 September 2006
Inspection Report: Wolsingham Primary School, 3–4 October 2006
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Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school's monitoring and self-evaluation of its work is accurate. The headteacher and senior staff have a good overview of the quality of provision and use this information well when managing change. Subject leaders monitor standards and progress through the use of good assessment systems. They have a good understanding of which aspects of their subjects pupils find the most difficult and have made changes to improve learning. As a result, standards are beginning to rise. For example, more able pupils who are now taught in separate groups for literacy and numeracy are consistently challenged. Parents of these pupils agree that this strategy is having a significant impact on pupils' academic standards and increasing their enjoyment of school.

The school has made good improvements to the way data on standards and pupils' progress are recorded. The headteacher, senior staff and governors use this information well in checking whether or not the school has reached its challenging targets. They do not yet, however, effectively analyse the information they have to give a clear view of the standards that each pupil, and each cohort, ought to be reaching. As a result, steps to ensure that pupils learn at a fast enough rate are not always put in place quickly enough.

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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 quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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	2
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

Wolsingham Primary School

Upper Town

Wolsingham

Bishop Auckland

County Durham

DL13 3ET

5 October 2006

Dear Children

Thank you for helping us last week when we inspected your school. You could not have been more friendly and polite. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. Lots of you told us that Wolsingham Primary is a good school. You are right, we agree.

Here are some of the things that we most like about your school.

- The way all the adults work so hard to look after you and help you to make the most of school.
- The way you get on so well together and help each other.
- The way that your school arranges lots of extra things, like the clubs, trips out of school, and the plays and musical productions that you enjoy. What a pity we missed 'Songs of the 60s'.
- How well you learn to lead healthy and safe lives and the wonderful school cook and her team who help you.
- As well as learning facts and English and mathematics, you are learning how to think, make good decisions, be considerate and become trusted, responsible people.

There were lots of other things of course, but we don't want to go on and on.

Here is what we have asked your school to do now.

One thing we have asked Mr Underwood, the governors and teachers to do is to keep on doing the things they are doing now. We think the school has come a long way and can only get even better.

We have recommended that teachers keep an even closer eye on how fast each of you, and each class, is learning. We think that will help the school to do something quickly in case learning ever starts slowing down. Of course you can do your bit by working hard and telling your teacher if you think the work is getting too easy!

Best wishes

Keith Oglesby & Linda Buller

The inspectors