

Ashington Wansbeck First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122239
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	292349
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Joan Elton

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ann Storey
Headteacher	Mrs Sharon Tait
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2002
School address	Wansbeck Road Ashington Northumberland NE63 8HZ
Telephone number	01670 812324
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Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school, situated in the town of Ashington. Pupils attend from all parts of the town and come from an area of mixed, private and local authority housing. The school's population is predominantly White British with a very small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. A below average percentage of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Whilst there are some features of deprivation, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. When children begin Nursery, their attainment is below the level typical for their ages.

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. It is generally held in high regard by parents and has notable strengths. These include the good behaviour of pupils and the good development of their personal well-being. Pupils' attitudes in class are positive; they enjoy their learning and express their feelings well. They have a good knowledge of how to keep safe. Although they have a good knowledge of what makes for a healthy lifestyle; in practice, this is less well developed. Their attendance is satisfactory. The school works well with other schools, the local authority and in other partnerships to promote learners' development and extend their learning opportunities through projects, visits and visitors.

Nursery provision is particularly good and parents are justified in praising it. New children settle quickly into its warm and caring environment. Activities are imaginative and highly skilled staff extend the children's learning socially and in the development of their basic skills.

Despite a low entry level of attainment, good teaching and learning enable children to leave Nursery with standards broadly in line with national expectations for children this age. Progress is satisfactory throughout Reception and standards are maintained. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress. Standards at Years 2 and 4 are broadly average, although there has been a dip in standards in mathematics at Year 4 from 2006 to 2007. The school is currently taking action to correct this, although pupils do not have enough practice in completing mental calculations.

Throughout the school, there is some good teaching and learning but it is not consistent, so overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. Progress accelerates when teaching and learning are good. Lessons then have a quicker pace and activities are challenging and imaginative. However, in some lessons, pupils spend too long listening to teachers talk, completing worksheets and too little time in activities which engage them. This results in low expectations and loss of concentration leading to limited achievement. Assessment and marking are not sufficiently rigorous or detailed to help pupils improve their work.

Curriculum provision is satisfactory. The curriculum is planned to ensure that pupils develop sound basic skills that contribute to their satisfactory preparation for their next stage of learning and future life. There is a good range of after-school clubs. The school takes good care of pupils and all safeguarding requirements are in place.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher, senior staff and governors are accurate in their assessment of the school and have correctly identified areas for development. They have introduced systems to improve performance and are successfully developing staff to take on new responsibilities. These initiatives have taken place since 2006, when staffing has been stable. Prior to this date, the school experienced several years of staff changes and had several other issues to resolve. Until now, subject leaders have not monitored, evaluated and supported provision within their subjects with sufficient rigour. The school has received good support from the local authority to fund the necessary changes. The school has successfully addressed the issues from the last inspection. The school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory and it provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils in Key Stage 2 more opportunities to practise mental mathematical calculations.

- Ensure teachers' expectations of all pupils are consistently high; work is matched accurately to pupils' varying needs and all marking helps them to improve their work.
- Ensure that subject leaders monitor, evaluate and support rigorously the provision and standards within the subjects for which they are responsible.

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 their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average, similar to the time of the last inspection. Children start school with skill levels below that are typical for children of Nursery age. Progress in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, but good in the Nursery. By the end of Nursery, standards are broadly in line with those expected for children this age. By the time that they enter Year 1, standards are broadly average.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 although it is good in some classes. The slower progress is characterised by lessons in which teachers do not always provide hard enough work for all pupils. This is because work is not always matched accurately enough to pupils' varying needs. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average. This reflects the school's results in the national assessments for the last few years, including 2006. By the end of Year 4, standards remain broadly average, but in mathematics they are not as high as they should be. One of the reasons for this is that pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop mental calculation strategies. Teachers' expectations need to be higher and their use of assessment improved to make sure that all pupils are working at a level that challenges them.

Although results of the national assessments indicate that girls attain higher than boys, inspection evidence found that this was not as significant as the latest results showed. Pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Minority ethnic pupils, including those who are learning English as an additional language, make similar progress and attain broadly similar standards as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are good. Pupils make a good start in Nursery, learning how to share and socialise together. Throughout the school, pupils are friendly and polite. They move around school safely and behaviour in lessons is good. Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. Pupils settle well to their tasks and work hard. They enjoy lessons better when they are active, for example, in art, science and physical education. There are many opportunities for older pupils to help, for example, as playground buddies or operating the CD player in assemblies. They say bullying occurs from time to time, but are confident that the suggestion box or approachable adults give them the opportunity to seek help when upset or worried. The school council makes suggestions for improvements around school and children know that the school takes notice of their views.

The school is working to promote healthy lifestyles, for example, by providing water, milk and fruit. There are healthy choices at lunchtime and a good range of opportunities for exercise in

physical education and after-school sports clubs. However, the low take up of healthy school meals and the contents of lunch boxes, which for example include crisps and chocolate bars, reveal that pupils are not yet making enough healthy choices. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is good practice in all key stages, but it is too variable to ensure that pupils' learning is consistently good. Teachers are generally well organised and present new learning clearly, often using resources to good effect to reinforce pupils' understanding. The good rapport between teachers and pupils ensures that pupils concentrate well for most of the time and develop a sensible approach to learning.

Teaching is effective when teachers' expectations of pupils are high and the level of challenge is well matched to pupils' needs. For example, the use of commas within sentences certainly tested pupils in a Year 4 lesson. Such lessons tend to be well paced, lively and interesting so that pupils' learning is stronger and swifter.

Often though, teaching is not so dynamic. The subject matter does not always excite pupils' interest and extend their capabilities. For example, pupils do not have enough scope to develop mental strategies in mathematics, which helps to explain their limited progress in Key Stage 2. Teachers are not routinely insistent enough about precision in pupils' work through helpful marking, although guidance in lesson by teachers and teaching assistants is usually well focused and supportive.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The suitable emphases on literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT) ensure that pupils acquire sound basic skills. Teachers are increasingly developing these skills through other subjects, but opportunities are not planned systematically enough. Similarly, some teachers provide interesting activities in lessons and there is a good variety of interesting clubs after school, such as gardening and Funky Fitness, which tend to be oversubscribed. However, not all teachers design their curriculum with enough creativity to motivate pupils with regularity.

Pupils benefit equally from the curriculum. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good individual learning plans. The most able pupils quite often have separate challenges, although the school has yet to fine-tune their provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This is satisfactory. The school knows its pupils well and takes good care of them. There are efficient procedures in place to ensure child protection, health and safety. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified. They receive effective targeted support to help them make progress. This is particularly good in reading. Good use is made of external agencies when needed. This safeguards pupils' welfare and gives additional support to pupils with more specialised needs.

A new tracking system has been introduced, but it is not always used consistently to identify those pupils whose progress is stalling. In classes where target setting is used well, pupils are effectively involved in their own learning and make good progress. Parents are kept well informed by newsletters.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, senior staff and governors give a clear direction of how they want the school to improve. There has been adequate improvement since the last inspection and the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. The leaders have brought about good improvements in the Foundation Stage provision, particularly in the Nursery. This has led to children making good progress at this stage. Good systems have been put in place for tracking pupils' progress generally but they have not been in place long enough or used consistently well enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and is based on regular monitoring of the school's work by senior leaders. Although they know the school's strengths and weaknesses, the weaknesses in teaching and learning are not always remedied quickly enough. The school is in a sound position to move forward with improving the quality of teaching and learning because the headteacher has ensured that subject coordinators have received the training needed to provide more effective leadership within the subjects for which they are responsible.

Governance is satisfactory. Some governors are recent appointments and their ability to monitor and evaluate all aspects of school life is at an early stage of development. Overall, governors have a very sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are highly committed to helping the school improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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

28 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Ashington Wansbeck First School, Ashington, NE63 8HZ

Thank you for the help you gave us during our recent inspection. We were most impressed with your good manners and good behaviour in lessons and about the school. You listened well and expressed your opinions and answers very clearly. When the inspectors interviewed some of you, we could tell that you were trying hard to give us the correct impression because you gave us such good examples. I am sure your teachers will be pleased to know that you enjoy school the most when you are involved in practical activities such as, art, physical education and problem solving. You are also very enthusiastic about the clubs they provide for you.

Your school is a safe and caring place and you learn well how to be good citizens there. You also make the progress in your lessons we expect. We have asked your headteacher and governors to help you to reach higher standards in mathematics by the time you leave the school. Your teachers have been asked to help you make quicker progress. They will do this by finding out your problems and giving you the help you need. Teachers will expect you to do even better than you are now. You can help by aiming to do your very best at all times. Also, your work will be set so that it is not too easy or too hard. You can help by taking careful note of the comments in your books that will help you to improve.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time in school and to achieve the success you need and deserve. You could help your school improve by always doing your homework. Practise your mental mathematics. Keep on reading for pleasure. You need to work hard to achieve as much success as possible. Achieving success will make you feel pleased with yourself!

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Elton

Lead Inspector