



# Athersley North Primary School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 131157  
**Local Authority** Barnsley  
**Inspection number** 293715  
**Inspection dates** 18–19 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** John Brennan

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Lindhurst Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Athersley North, Barnsley
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		South Yorkshire S71 3NB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01226 288674
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	301	<b>Fax number</b>	01226 204633
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Patricia Newman
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Margaret Newcombe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 May 2001		

<b>Age group</b> 3–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 18–19 October 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 293715
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This larger than average school serves families in Athersley. This is a very socially and economically disadvantaged area and this is reflected in the school's intake. Children start school with skills and abilities that are extremely low, Thirty five per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is more than double the national average. Almost all of the pupils are of White British heritage. However, there are a small but growing number of pupils from other backgrounds, some of whom are at the early stages of learning English. Approximately half of the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved a Healthy Schools Award and an Activemark from Sport England. There have been significant changes in several leadership positions since the last inspection.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

A parent noted, 'How much I have seen the school improve recently,' a view echoed by staff, governors and the local authority. Much of this is down to the headteacher who has galvanised the school community into reversing a downward spiral and in tackling the many barriers pupils face to learning. However, as a governor determinedly noted, 'There is more to do'. As the school itself accurately recognises, this is a satisfactory school which gives satisfactory value for money.

A culture of praise ensures that, in the main, pupils behave well. Classrooms are by and large productive places. Many pupils are choosing to eat healthily and more and more attend well. This helps their achievement. The school takes good care of pupils. In particular, skilled teaching assistants give sensitive support to the many pupils who have emotional and learning needs. This helps them develop more positive attitudes towards themselves, their peers and school. With the aid of the local authority and because of the good work of the assessment coordinator, teachers have been equipped with procedures that help them set clear learning targets for pupils. Expectations have risen and lessons have clarity of purpose. Teaching and learning are satisfactory because inconsistencies remain in how well teachers teach toward the targets. Reading is well taught and pupils are doing well. Basic mathematical skills are accurately taught but the teaching of writing and the encouragement of speech are less well taught. Too much of what pupils do in writing is mundane; pupils are rarely creative or reflective in English lessons or in the curriculum as a whole. The Foundation Stage curriculum is built on the bedrock of practical, talk-based learning. The Nursery teacher skillfully puts these principles into action but this is less successfully achieved in Reception and elsewhere in the school. In what constitutes a satisfactory curriculum, more could be done to make learning interesting and enriching. There are some examples of pupils being challenged to express their views in lessons and respond to questions which test thinking. However, there are too many lessons during which pupils listen for too long and in which questions are too easy. As a result, many pupils have difficulty expressing thoughts and opinions both verbally and orally. As a consequence of this uneven picture, achievement is satisfactory, although standards are low when pupils leave at the end of Year 6.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has a clear improvement plan. However, the capacity to improve is only satisfactory because many leaders are at the early stages of acquiring the skills needed to guide colleagues and check on the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms. This is the prime reason for the present inconsistent picture in teaching, learning and achievement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the way teachers question pupils, encourage talk and teach writing.
- Ensure that the curriculum gives pupils more opportunities to be creative and reflective.
- Ensure that subject coordinators and other leaders monitor teaching and learning more effectively.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils who have emotional and learning needs are given considerable support and make steady academic progress. The school has responded well to an increase in pupils at the early stages of learning English. As their needs are quickly diagnosed and suitable support given, they too make satisfactory progress. Nursery pupils achieve well because of a vibrant curriculum that meets their needs. The curriculum in Reception is not as well implemented; here children make steady progress but few attain the goals usually expected of pupils by the time they start Year 1. Results in the national tests at Year 2 and Year 6 have often been very low. Provisional results for 2006 were the highest for many years in Year 2. Results in Year 6 did not show such an improvement because an extremely high proportion of pupils had learning and emotional needs. Work seen in books and in lessons, allied to the school's detailed tracking data, shows pupils making steady progress during their time in school. Efforts to improve reading are working well and it is here where achievement is strongest. A concentration on key mathematical skills leads to satisfactory achievement. However, the fostering of speech and of writing is less successful and pupils are capable of achieving more.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Most pupils behave well and take responsibility for their actions. The vast majority of pupils work hard. However, many have difficulty in expressing themselves in lessons and some become inattentive. Pupils are too rarely reflective or creative in their work and have a limited understanding of life outside of Athersley. The push on target-setting is helping pupils take responsibility for their work. However, apart from through the school council, opportunities for taking responsibility for wider aspects of school life are limited. Most pupils enjoy coming to school. Concerted efforts to improve attendance have led to a dramatic rise in attendance rates. An anti-bullying week has helped raise awareness among pupils of how to stay safe. Playtimes are amiable and reasonably active occasions. An increasing number of pupils, through initiatives such as a walk to school week, are attempting to live a healthy lifestyle. Pupils leave school with personal qualities that put them in a reasonable position to make the most of the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Strengths lie in the warm and encouraging relationships that, in the main, create calm and purposeful classrooms. Productive partnerships with skilled teaching assistants ensure that pupils' differing needs are met. Revamped assessment procedures ensure

that lessons are more precisely planned. Pupils invariably understand the intention of lessons. However, marking does not give pupils enough guidance. In some instances it is too accepting of poorly presented written work. Guidelines governing the teaching of reading are consistently implemented and almost everywhere you turn you can find pupils receiving extra help for this. Expert teaching in the Nursery ensures that talk abounds. Elsewhere, teachers meet with mixed success in promoting speaking. There are occasions when teachers use techniques such as 'talk partners' and drama to encourage speech and in which questions test and deepen pupils' thinking. However, there are equally occasions when teachers talk for too long without involving enough pupils. Teachers accurately teach key mathematical skills but there are weaknesses in the teaching of writing. Too much of what pupils do consists of routine exercises so that there are too few opportunities for pupils to draft and craft personal writing.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

A thorough programme for pupils' personal development forms a prominent part of pupils' learning and this helps to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The deputy headteacher leads the way in making the curriculum appealing. A thematic approach, typified by work on Pirates, engages pupils' interest. Pupils respond with zeal because as one boy said, 'We don't do history - we do pirates!' and went on to describe work he did in history, science, computing, mathematics and English. Such learning is the exception. Links between subjects, especially in writing, to help make learning creative are piecemeal. Some enrichment activities, through trips and clubs, are provided. However, given the perceived need by the school to broaden pupils' horizons, there is scope to do more. The aims of the Foundation Stage curriculum are more successfully achieved in the Nursery than Reception and this leads to uneven achievement by these young children.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Good understanding by staff of each individual and their family circumstances underpins the good care it offers pupils. Be it nurture groups, relaxation lessons, or loss and bereavement counselling, the support for emotionally vulnerable pupils is first rate, aiding their attitude to school and boosting self-esteem. Partnerships with agencies outside of school greatly benefit vulnerable pupils and ensure consistency of approach. Thorough assessment procedures ensure that those pupils who have learning difficulties are quickly identified and that Tailored support programmes are put in place. Assessment information generates key learning targets, which are becoming increasingly well known by pupils themselves. The school has robust procedures for pupils' safety, including those for child protection.

---

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

As a governor said, the school is committed to, 'improving the chances for children in Athersley.' An unsettled period since the last inspection has tested this resolve as behaviour and standards declined. This is now behind the school largely because of the energy and passion of the current headteacher. She has generated a sense of optimism and team spirit. Staff morale is high and parents have every confidence in the school. Governors too, now play a fuller part in leading the school forward and are beginning to ask searching questions of how well it is doing. Revised guidelines for behaviour ensure a settled school. With the help of the local authority, the school has built clear structures within which short term improvement targets focus the efforts of teachers. The assessment coordinator has successfully implemented new assessment systems which enable the school to pinpoint and tackle underachievement. This twin track approach of targets and assessment has boosted achievement. It has also given the school an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses, leading to a well written improvement plan. Leadership up to this point has been concerned with establishing new policies and procedures. However, apart from using data as a guide, the impact of key changes has not always been carefully checked. Many leaders are only at the beginning of developing the skills needed to help them to assess the success of teaching and learning in action. As a result, practice in the classroom is still too variable.

**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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
---	-----------------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We would like to share with you what we thought about your school.

We could see that the headteacher has made a big difference to your school and that other staff and governors join together in trying to make Athersley the best school it can be.

We saw that many of you were helping in this by trying to behave well and trying to work hard in lessons. More and more of you come to school everyday. We hope that you can continue to do this. We saw that a lot of you are eating healthily and for the most part you play well together.

We were especially pleased with how many of you seem to enjoy reading. We were always coming across children getting extra help for this. We saw that some of you find school life difficult but were very impressed with the different ways teaching assistants work with you to make school fun and to help you get the most out of school. We did feel that there were times in lesson when the questions you were asked were too easy and in which you had to listen for too long instead of saying what you thought. We have asked the school to get you to talk more in lessons. We didn't see a lot of story writing or writing when you have to invent your thoughts. We have asked the school to look again at the sort of writing you do. You can help in this by trying to make your writing neat. You told us how much you enjoy work like the topic work on pirates that some of you are doing and how much you enjoy going on trips. We have asked the school to give you more work that makes you use your imagination and to think about how trips out of school might help with this.

There are some nice things going on in classrooms dotted around the school. We have asked your teachers to pop into each other's classrooms more often to see what is going on.

Thank you once again for your kindness. Good luck in the future.