

# West Denton Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108449
<b>Local Authority</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	309694
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Derek Neil HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	300
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Stephen Griffith MBE
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Sarah Knowles
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Hillhead Road West Denton Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE5 1DN
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 2674211
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 2674211

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

West Denton is a fairly large primary school situated in the Denton ward of Newcastle upon Tyne. Formerly a first school for pupils aged 3–9 years, it became a primary school for pupils aged 3–11 years in 2003. It had its first set of national test results for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2005.

The attainment of pupils when they start school in the Nursery and in Reception is low. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above average. The proportion of pupils who do not use English as their first language is about average.

The school has healthy school status, and drugs education and silver Artsmark awards.

## 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 has some significant strengths and is improving rapidly. Parents are very happy to send their children here. They particularly appreciate the way the staff help pupils when they have problems, and work hard to create a happy atmosphere. As one parent expressed it, 'Not only is my child taught their lessons, she learns social skills as well; this is because the team is very committed, running lots of clubs to get the children to interact.'

The high level of care and support provided by the school is a well established strength. This contributes greatly to the pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils enjoy school, behave well and work hard. However, until recently, standards of pupils' work were too low. This is because, when the school became an all-through primary, its relatively inexperienced staff were not prepared well enough for the change. Since then, the senior leadership team has carried out a thorough and accurate evaluation of what the school is doing and has laid very well informed plans to raise standards. Already the new curriculum, with its systematic emphasis on basic skills, and the improved teaching have raised standards throughout the school. Much remains to be done. Although pupils make satisfactory progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 and reach standards that are broadly in line with the national average, some of the most able pupils, especially girls, are underachieving. Standards in mathematics are still too low. The curriculum needs further attention; in particular it does not provide enough planned opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills in different contexts, and it lacks opportunities for spiritual and cultural development.

Nonetheless, the school knows itself well. It has good plans for the future, and a strong commitment to succeed. Its capacity for further improvement is good.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Standards on entry to the Nursery are below those typically seen in three-year-olds. Children enjoy the wide range of activities provided which develop good social skills and prepare them for the next stage. A high priority is given to promoting their literacy and numeracy. For example, in one session groups of children in the Nursery worked hard to 'write' a list of equipment they might buy for a new baby. The comprehensive planning covers all areas of learning and gives a strong emphasis to learning in the adult-led activities. Learning outside, however, is only given a small allocation of time. Teaching and assessment are good. As a result of this well coordinated work in Nursery and Reception, pupils make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1 they have reached standards in all areas of learning that are broadly typical.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics.
- Improve the achievement of its most able pupils.
- Create more opportunities for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

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**

Pupils start Key Stage 1 with skills that are typical for their age. They make satisfactory progress over the next two years and standards at the end of the key stage are about average.

In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is patchy; in some classes they move faster than in others. Since the school became an all-through primary, it has not enabled pupils to reach their potential and as a result, the standards they have reached when they are 11 have been too low. Things have improved recently and in 2007 pupils' standards were broadly average in English and science, though they remained below average in mathematics. This represented satisfactory achievement for most pupils. However, more able pupils, especially girls, are still underachieving. In English, pupils write neatly and use a good range of vocabulary. They have a sound knowledge of different literary techniques but do not always apply them well when working independently, because they have lacked practice. In mathematics, the school has recognised that pupils' calculation skills are insecure. Their ability to do mental arithmetic is satisfactory and improving.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, particularly those that benefit from extra work in small groups outside their normal lessons.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe there. The school has worked very hard to improve attendance, which has risen consistently each year since the last inspection and is now good. This success is largely due to the arrangements for rewarding good attendance, for example with tickets to a Newcastle United match. Behaviour is very good; in lessons pupils listen carefully and answer questions thoughtfully. They learn how to make healthy choices, such as eating healthily and taking exercise. Many participate in sports activities after school. Pupils contribute well to school life through activities such as the school council and the buddy system. Young leaders make playtimes enjoyable for younger children by organising games. Pupils' basic skills, their politeness and their respect for others provide a sound basis for life beyond school. As one parent commented, 'My child has grown up and matured so much since starting here.'

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. Pupils' social skills are very good but they have few opportunities for reflection and contemplation, even in assemblies. While some activities have been designed to broaden their understanding of other cultures, this is not reflected widely across the school. For example, there is little evidence of this in displays.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned; the teacher has a clear idea of what needs to be learned and devises a good range of relevant tasks to ensure pupils make progress at a satisfactory or better rate. The lessons are well structured. They begin with a very useful recapitulation of what pupils have already covered; proceed with a good blend of activities for the whole class, for groups and for individuals; and end with a brief session to reflect on what

has been learned and to look forward to the next lesson. Lessons are taught at a brisk pace and are often presented in a lively and interesting way. The interactive white board, for example, is used well to make clear the lesson's main messages. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants, who are fully briefed on what they have to do. Pupils respond well; they pay attention and try their best when answering questions or doing written work. In the better lessons, all pupils are set work at a suitably challenging level and have a lot of opportunity to work independently. This represents an improvement in the quality of teaching and is beginning to have a positive effect on standards. In a minority of lessons, work is not matched well enough to pupils' ability; for example, the teacher gives too much help when asking questions or the extra work that is set for the most able is not designed to extend their thinking and understanding.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum provides pupils with a satisfactory range of activities to promote learning and enjoyment. Pupils appreciate the good attention given to keeping fit and healthy through the school's many sporting activities, including those organised through the sports leadership programme. The healthy school and drugs education awards reflect the priority given to making life safe for pupils. The recent emphasis on improving basic skills is beginning to make an impact on raising standards, although opportunities to apply writing skills across the curriculum and to use links between different subjects to further pupils' learning are at an early stage of development. The school enriches its curriculum with visits and themed weeks, which the pupils thoroughly enjoy. For example, pupils visited the Newcastle Evening Chronicle offices where they produced their own newspaper. The many out-of-school clubs, such as cookery, dancing, and badminton, are well supported, and changeovers are organised each half term so no one misses out.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good pastoral care, for example through a parent support adviser who works with families needing help. Robust systems ensure the safety and welfare of pupils, who are well supervised throughout the day. Although a small minority of parents and pupils feel a need for greater protection at break times, inspectors found no direct evidence to support their concern. The school is committed to providing training in child protection to keep all staff updated. Parents value the school's support and find the staff approachable if they have any concerns.

The school knows its pupils well. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are thorough and assessment information is used to good effect to set targets. Pupils' work is marked satisfactorily; teachers usually give good guidance on how it can be improved, although this practice is inconsistent. Thorough planning, record-keeping and monitoring help children of lower ability to achieve well.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The school's increasing successes are due to strong teamwork in the leadership team and throughout the staff. The staff's commitment to developing fully rounded young people by providing an enjoyable experience is reflected in the school's rising standards and its 'wonderful atmosphere', as one parent expressed it. The commitment to teamwork is illustrated by the work of one teacher's effective leadership of the Foundation Stage during the absence of the Early Years Leader.

It was not always thus. When the school became an all-through primary, many staff were inexperienced and, because they were not supported well enough, pupils' achievement initially was poor. Since then, managers have got to grips with the problems. By providing support and training for staff and by making radical changes to the curriculum they have raised standards throughout the school. These improvements are based on a comprehensive analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a well researched development plan whose main focus is on raising standards. Subject leaders have played their part in this. They have developed their skills in monitoring teaching and learning to bring about improvements; in mathematics, for example, staff are given very insightful, specific advice on how their teaching could be better. There is still some way to go; standards are not yet high enough and leaders are not ensuring the most able pupils achieve as well as they can.

Governors and parents are fully informed about the school's work and make an important contribution by suggesting what would make it better. The budget is used wisely and the school has a good level of resources. A large surplus has been used to improve the school environment and further plans are laid to improve the cramped and inhospitable infant playground. Parents and staff are rightly concerned, however, about the lack of suitable facilities for physical education.

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## Annex A

## 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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	2
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?	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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	3
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

5 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Denton Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 1DN

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly into your school. We enjoyed watching you in lessons and at play; talking about your school with you and your teachers; and looking at your work. Now we want to share with you what we thought.

Here are some of the many things we liked.

- You told us you like coming to school and feel safe there.
- We saw that you were clearly enjoying your lessons. You work hard in class by answering the teacher's questions and getting on with your own work.
- Your behaviour is good. You listen carefully to the teacher and you walk around the school in a sensible way, showing consideration and respect for others. You should be proud of this.
- Your teachers and other staff take very good care of you while you are at school.
- The teachers are encouraging you to attend every day by giving prizes to pupils who are never absent. We were very envious of those of you who won a ticket to see Newcastle United play; what a pity they lost!
- You make a good contribution to the life of the school, for example by being a member of the school council or a young sports leader.
- You know how important it is to eat healthily and take plenty of exercise.

We think you and your teachers could make the school even better and this is what we would like to happen now.

- We have asked your teachers to help you to do a little better in mathematics and to help more of you to reach higher levels in all your subjects.
- We have asked the staff to give you more opportunities to learn about other cultures and to think about some of the inspiring things in the world.

Best wishes

Derek Neil

Her Majesty's Inspector