

Fens Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111600
Local Authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	310637
Inspection date	22 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Gianna Ulyatt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	428
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Burn
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Bousfield
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Mowbray Road Hartlepool TS25 2LY
Telephone number	01429 870405
Fax number	01429 872843

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: provision in the Foundation Stage; the quality of teaching and learning and the impact of changes to the curriculum on pupils' enjoyment of learning. Evidence was gathered from performance data and other school documentation, observations of teaching and learning, the work produced by pupils (including how pupils interact with each other and their response to what is provided for them), parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest the school's own assessment, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

The school is almost twice the size of other primary schools nationally and is set in an area of average social advantage. The proportion of pupils who claim a free school meal is below the national average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage with very few from minority ethnic backgrounds. A below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school because the school works relentlessly to ensure excellence in teaching and learning. Standards have been maintained at a consistently high level over a number of years. Nevertheless, the school is not complacent and is continuously looking at ways to improve the education it offers its pupils. Rigorous self-evaluation is part of the culture of the school and, through her outstanding leadership, the headteacher empowers staff to develop new initiatives and ideas. As a result, the school has improved the strengths recognised in the last inspection and continues to identify further areas for improvement. Parents wholeheartedly support the school and are proud of the standards their children reach, both academically and personally.

Achievement is outstanding and standards are extremely high at the end of both key stages due to outstanding teaching and a curriculum which inspires pupils towards excellence. The basis for this is laid in the Foundation Stage where the provision is outstanding so children make excellent progress. By the end of Year 2, the majority of pupils reach the expected standard and a significantly high number attain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. There are similarly high levels of attainment at the end of Year 6. A significant majority of boys and girls reach the standard expected and over half attain at the higher level in English, mathematics and science. The school's data indicates that current pupils are maintaining this trend and making outstanding progress. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress because they are nurtured, taught well and achieve the challenging targets set for them.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in this excellent learning climate, is exemplary. Pupils show high levels of social responsibility as well as great compassion for those less fortunate than themselves. The school purchases Fair Trade goods, for example, and the recently established links with schools in Ghana and Malawi are broadening pupils' horizons well. Some Year 6 pupils are trained play leaders and teach infant pupils how to play games during playtimes. Pupils are responsible for producing the very readable school newspaper, 'Fens Talk'. Lunchtimes, set out with tablecloths and napkins, are a pleasant, social occasion for pupils. Pupils enjoy a good diet and the salad bar is very popular. They know that plenty of exercise also prepares them well for a healthy lifestyle. This is one of the reasons why the sports clubs are so well attended. Pupils are extremely proud that their school is among the highest performing schools in the country and know that the good education they receive prepares them exceptionally well for their future working life.

Pupils are learning so successfully because teachers have very good subject knowledge. They have a very clear understanding about what each pupil knows and can do. They focus on individuals and plan lessons that take very careful account of the needs of every pupil. Explanations are very clear and teachers repeat new ideas in different ways, making sure all understand. They provide pupils with very interesting and difficult work; expectations are high. In addition, pupils approach their learning with complete confidence because they know that, whether their rate of learning is quick or slow, they will always be helped and supported. Consequently, no pupil falls behind and all are strongly challenged. In lessons, pupils know what they are learning and what is expected of them. They listen carefully, participate fully and know what they need to do to improve their work.

The outstanding curriculum and the extensive range of extra activities at lunchtime and after school are planned so well that pupils are excited about coming to school. Attendance is good because the school monitors absences very closely. Due to the extremely strong links the school has with the local secondary school, pupils benefit from specialist teaching in some subjects such as French and mathematics, as well as design and technology.

- A most recent and very successful initiative linking subjects together, which was identified through self-evaluation, is having a strong impact on the curriculum. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the way they are learning to use knowledge and skills from one subject to help them learn in another. For example, they enjoy using information and communication technology, English and mathematics to support science and other subjects. Pupils receive very high levels of care because systems and procedures to protect and safeguard them are in place and adhered to. Staff are very well informed about protecting children and receive regular training. Pupils say there is no bullying at all and they can speak with confidence to any member of staff should they need to.

Leadership is excellent and inspirational. The headteacher is an outstanding leader who is well supported by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable senior team. They share a very strong commitment to high standards and pupils' well-being. They ensure that all pupils enjoy their education, and learn and achieve as well as they possibly can in a caring and supportive environment. Teamwork is exceptional and staff say, 'You are never alone in this school; there is always someone with relevant expertise to support you.' Governors play a full and active part in the school's strategic leadership. They both question and support its work well. This is truly an outstanding school and is extremely well placed to continue to provide an excellent education for its pupils.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision is outstanding in terms of the progress children make. Their attainment when they start school is typical for their age. Progress is rapid because of very good teaching, a challenging curriculum and high levels of care. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children are confident learners, extremely well behaved and reach levels that are above those expected for their age in all six areas of learning. Many parents confirm that their children clearly enjoy coming to the Nursery and Reception classes, because induction procedures ensure that they settle well and are ready to learn. Planning gives good emphasis to personal development, communication, language and literacy and early mathematics. There is a good balance between activities that are directed by adults and those from which children can choose. Children learn particularly well in adult-directed groups and the strong emphasis on early sound and letter recognition ensures children are able to read and write by the time they leave the Reception class. This means they are very well prepared for Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no points for development that the school has not already identified.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

22 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fens Primary School, Hartlepool, TS25 2LY

I would like to thank you all for making my visit to your school a very enjoyable and pleasant experience. You are very friendly and polite. I particularly enjoyed having lunch with you and listening to your views about your school. I can tell you really do enjoy your lessons because teachers make learning fun and you know there is always someone to help if you get stuck with your work. I was especially impressed about the way you explained the school rules, which you have written by yourselves, and placed in the school behaviour policy. You really do include everyone and try to build up friendships. I noticed this in the playground where everyone was enjoying themselves and no one was left out.

I was very impressed with the work I saw in your books. I was amazed at how clever you are when you answered very hard questions in your English and mathematics lessons. It is wonderful to know that so many of you value your school work because you explained to me that it is through your education you will get good jobs. I know many of you should succeed because you are all getting off to a fantastic start in your school starting from the Nursery upwards. Standards are very high and your school is among the top 10% in the country. That is because your headteacher, teachers and assistants work very hard for you and you work very hard for them. How wonderful is that?

You certainly enjoy the way the school is linking learning through different subjects. You show great interest in many of the countries around the world with which your school has contact. I was touched by the compassion you show to those less fortunate than you. You attend an outstanding school and because of this you must continue to work very hard to keep up the very high standards. I hope you will continue to take a full and active part in all the new ideas teachers suggest to you. That will help your school continue to move forward in an interesting and exciting way.

I hope you do well in your national tests and that you settle well into secondary education. Remember, always try your very, very best.

Gianna Ulyatt

Lead inspector