

Simonside Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 108698 |
| Local Authority | South Tyneside |
| Inspection number | 324817 |
| Inspection dates | 30 June –1 July 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Janet Bennett |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 178 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Leila Hassan |
| Headteacher | Mr Jim Purvis |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 May 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Glasgow Road Jarrow Tyne and Wear NE32 4AU |
| Telephone number | 0191 4898315 |
| Fax number | 0191 4838500 |

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| Age group | 4–11 |
| Inspection dates | 30 June –1 July 2009 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Simonside Primary School is smaller than average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average and the proportion speaking English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average as is the proportion eligible for free school meals. Specialist support for primary aged pupils with hearing impairment is provided by local authority staff who work as integral members of the school team. The school provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. The school runs a breakfast club and parent and toddler group.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an inclusive school that makes good provision for its pupils. Strong relationships and the good levels of care that pupils receive contribute very well to their personal development and well-being. Parents are appreciative of the work of the school and comment particularly on their children's good progress and the confidence they gain during their time at Simonside.

From starting points that are well below those typical for their age when they enter the Reception class, all pupils make good progress and achieve well by the end of Key Stage 2. Standards are rising and at the end of Year 2 are now broadly average. Standards in Year 6 are broadly average in mathematics and science, but they remain below average in English. However, standards in English are improving, particularly in writing, and the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in writing is now close to that seen nationally. This represents good progress in relation to these pupils' starting points. Effective partnerships with external agencies and specialist staff ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as those deemed to be vulnerable, receive the support they need to overcome potential barriers to their learning. As a result, they make good progress, achieve well and contribute fully to every aspect of school life.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. They enjoy their learning, behave well and are keen to take responsibility and make a positive contribution to the daily life of the school and local community. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping healthy. They take part enthusiastically in the many opportunities for physical activity within and beyond the school day. The social and academic skills that pupils gain and their positive attitudes to school prepare them well for their next stage of learning.

Teaching is good. Staff plan interesting and varied activities which engage pupils well. They effectively share their good subject knowledge with the pupils. Lessons are structured well and build successfully upon prior learning. Effective partnerships ensure that teaching assistants and specialist staff make a strong contribution to learning. Pupils are increasingly involved in setting their own improvement targets but they are not always encouraged to use these in lessons to evaluate and improve their work.

The good levels of care pupils receive contribute well to their academic progress and personal development. Pupils feel safe in school in the knowledge that they will receive help and support when it is needed.

Leadership and management are good. Governors are well involved in the work of the school and contribute effectively to its development. The high priority given to pupils' care and well-being is evident in the school's inclusive ethos. The school knows the way ahead and changes are starting to have an impact. This can be seen in the improved opportunities to extend speaking and listening skills and more first-hand experiences which are motivating pupils to write. However, monitoring by senior leaders has not been sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the most effective practice is identified and embedded across the school so that the rate of improvement is accelerated. For example, the use of learning targets by some teachers is not effective in all lessons. Consequently, the school has sound capacity to build further on its successes.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. From starting points that are well below those typical for their age, most notably in language acquisition, children make good progress particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. However, by the end of the Reception Year standards remain below average overall and well below average in communication, language and literacy development.

The strong relationships that exist in school ensure that children rapidly grow in confidence and become independent learners who enjoy their time in school. They are keen to take responsibility, for example, by tidying away at the end of sessions. The children's welfare is effectively promoted. Consequently, they show good awareness of their own health and safety by wearing hats and sunscreen when they play outdoors and by drinking water regularly when they are physically active.

Staff know children well and work effectively together to plan activities that interest and engage them in purposeful activities. Adults provide good role models, particularly in their use of language. They extend children's experiences by planning a wide range of opportunities for learning including a range of interesting visits. Children enjoy the opportunities they have to learn indoors and outdoors but some of the activities they access independently are not organised and resourced sufficiently to challenge and extend their learning.

Leadership and management are good. Systems for assessing and monitoring children's progress are effective and parents are increasingly involved in this process. Strengths and priorities for further development have been identified but monitoring to evaluate the impact of provision on children's learning is not yet fully embedded.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase levels of challenge in the activities that children choose for themselves in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Ensure that monitoring rigorously evaluates the impact of provision on learning in order to embed and extend the most effective practice across the school.
- Ensure pupils use their targets in lessons to evaluate and improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Relative to their starting points, all pupils, irrespective of their backgrounds, make good progress and standards are broadly average by the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils start Year 1 with below average skills. Teacher assessments in 2008 show that standards in Year 2, although below average, are rising especially in mathematics and writing. Current standards show the improvement has been sustained and standards are now broadly average in reading, writing, science and mathematics and more pupils are achieving the higher levels.

The 2008 results of national tests at the end of Year 6 show a rising trend and standards in mathematics and science were close to those seen nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher level in science was above average. Standards in English were below average. Reading was better than writing where not enough pupils reached the level expected for their age. Standards in English remain below average but they are rising especially in writing.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those pupils with hearing impairment and those learning English as an additional language make good progress because the support they receive enables them to contribute fully in lessons and play an active role in the life of the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. They make good progress in developing an understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. They have a good understanding of local culture and heritage but their understanding of other cultures and traditions is less well developed. Their attendance is satisfactory. Pupils say they enjoy school and are keen to learn. This is demonstrated by their positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons and around the school. Pupils are developing a good understanding of healthy living and are keen to take part in the many out of school sports clubs, in addition to the well organised coaching sessions which are a feature of the school curriculum. The school council makes a good contribution to school life and their recommendations are valued and acted upon. Pupils feel safe because they know who to turn to for help should they need it. This sometimes includes other pupils who are keen to show responsibility by contributing to the corporate life of the school as well as to the local community. Pupils are well prepared for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Very strong relationships are a feature of many lessons and give pupils high levels of confidence. As a result, pupils willingly share their ideas and contribute fully in lessons. Teachers plan interesting and varied activities which fire pupils' enthusiasm and this contributes very well to pupils' enjoyment of school. The increased focus on talking and clarifying ideas is helping pupils to improve their writing. Staff use their good subject knowledge to plan well structured lessons. Assessment information is used well so that activities build successfully on prior learning. Teaching assistants are clearly informed about their role in lessons and this enables them to make a strong contribution to pupils' learning, particularly those who are vulnerable, learning English as an additional language or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Work is regularly marked and teachers are starting to involve pupils more in their own learning. They encourage pupils to identify their individual learning targets and in the most successful lessons, teachers refer to these targets so that pupils evaluate and improve their work. This good practice is accelerating pupils' learning but as yet is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Pupils benefit from the balanced range of activities in all subjects, enriched by visitors and visits outside school. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities is well supported, providing good opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting activities and also to develop their musical skills. For example, popular groups include samba drums, ocarina and recorder. Regularly planned activities promote pupils' personal and social development well. These are complemented by experiences beyond the classroom, such as a residential visit which includes activities to promote team building skills. This contributes well

to pupils' social and cultural development. Awareness of the local religious and industrial heritage is promoted very successfully and as a result pupils identify closely with their local community; however, national and international links are less extensive. The curriculum promotes pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills well and many opportunities are provided for pupils to use these skills to support their learning in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good, contributing well to their academic progress and personal development. Relationships are strong and all staff take collective responsibility for the care and well-being of every pupil in school. Measures for safeguarding learners are in place. Good levels of supervision ensure that the extensive outdoor play areas can be safely enjoyed. Behaviour is monitored and managed effectively resulting in good behaviour in lessons and around the school. Pupils say they feel safe and well looked after because the systems for supporting pupils are clear and understood by all. Effective working with specialist staff and other agencies ensure that pupils receive the support they need. This helps vulnerable pupils to overcome potential barriers to their learning and ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully involved in the life of the school. The school is improving procedures to promote attendance by working closely with other agencies. Systems for tracking pupils' academic progress are good. The school is developing the use of this information and effective practice can be seen in the accurate targeting of support to where it is most needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher successfully promotes a climate in which all are welcomed and valued as individuals. He is well supported by a team of staff who are committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve as well as they can. Governors are a crucial part of the team and contribute well to its development. The strong relationships and the high priority given to pupils' care and well-being contribute very well to the personal development of learners and their enjoyment of school. The effective partnerships which exist within and beyond the school ensure that pupils receive the support they need and that opportunities to enrich pupils' learning experiences are maximised.

There are sound systems for school self-evaluation which involve all leaders and the headteacher. These processes have identified the school's main priorities for improvement. Actions taken, especially to tackle the weakness in writing, have reaped success and standards are rising. However, senior leaders have not been rigorous enough in their monitoring to ensure that the most effective practice is identified and embedded across the school. As a result, rates of learning are not improving as quickly as they could.

Strong local and regional partnerships have been established and the school is in the process of developing national and international links to extend pupils' global awareness. Current provision ensures that the school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| How effective,efficient and inclusive is the provision of education,integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 2 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 2 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 2 |

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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 |

Leadership and management

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| 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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 2 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 3 |
| 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 |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Simonside Primary School, South Tyneside, NE32 4AU

Thank you for making Mr Hall and me feel so welcome when we recently inspected your school. We think your school provides you with a good education and we were particularly impressed with the way in which staff care for you and how confident this helps you to become. You told us that you enjoy lessons and feel safe in school and we understand why. We were also impressed by:

- the good progress that you make in lessons, the ideas that you contribute and the way in which you are beginning to work with teachers to set your own learning targets
- your good behaviour in lessons and around school and the way in which you take responsibility for helping others, even the very youngest children in school
- the interesting lessons that teachers plan and the exciting range of visits and visitors that are organised
- your enthusiasm for all of the after-school clubs and your keenness to take part in sport and physical activity
- the detailed knowledge you have about the local area in which you live
- the ways in which all adults in school work together to help your learning to get better
- the way in which every pupil receives the help and support they need so that they can be actively involved in everything that happens in school.

We have identified three things to make your school even more successful. First, we would like staff to provide the children in the Reception class with more challenge in the activities that they choose themselves. Second, we would like all teachers to encourage you to use your learning targets more to evaluate and improve your work. Third, we think that staff should look closely at what activities are improving your progress and check that all staff provide you with these activities so that your progress gets even better.

We sincerely hope that you continue to enjoy your learning and wish you great things for the future.

Yours faithfully

Janet Bennett

Lead inspector