

Choppington First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122180
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327648
Inspection dates	23–24 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Shepherd

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.

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	71
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 Ann OHare
Headteacher	Mrs Hilda Blythe
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Eastgate Choppington Northumberland NE62 5RR
Telephone number	01670 823197
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Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves an area of some social and economic disadvantage. A higher proportion of pupils than usual are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion of those with a statement of special educational need. Over the past years the number of pupils leaving or entering the school during the year has been broadly average. Last year, the proportion increased significantly but it has reduced this year. Pupils are predominantly of White British origin. The school has undergone significant changes in staffing and the governing body since the previous inspection. There have been four different headteachers, with three different leaders this academic year. The current headteacher only took up her post three days before the inspection, as did one of the teachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. Although it has undergone considerable difficulties through staffing changes, it is now in a much better position to develop its provision. The headteacher has a very clear view of how to improve the school, with a strong commitment to whole-school decision making. Parents are positive about the work of the school. They have some misgivings about the impact of the changes in leadership but appreciate that their children enjoy school. A typical comment was, 'The current teachers are great with the children and are very approachable'.

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enter Year 1 with below average standards. Standards in the national assessments have been significantly below average at the end of Year 2. As a result, the school strengthened its focus on basic skills; standards are now rising and are currently below average. Current pupils were seen to be making good progress because the teaching is consistently good. Progress is satisfactory in Years 3 and 4 and, by the time pupils leave the school, standards are still below average. The curriculum is satisfactory; opportunities are not exploited enough to develop literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers all manage behaviour well resulting in good levels of behaviour, but the quality of support from teaching assistants is inconsistent. This has a variable impact on pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nevertheless, the overall achievement of these pupils is satisfactory.

Personal development is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school and the majority have positive attitudes towards learning. This is due to the care staff take with individuals. Pupils have a good understanding of what they have achieved but are not as clear about how to improve their work in future. Attendance rates have been well below average over recent years and although they are improving they remain too low. Punctuality is also an area for development. Pupils' adoption of a safe and healthy lifestyle is satisfactory, as is their preparation for economic well-being.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Established members of staff have played an important part in promoting continuity through the staffing changes and improvement is satisfactory since the previous inspection. Self-evaluation is adequate but not extended enough across senior staff. Governance is satisfactory. The capacity to improve is satisfactory, rather than good, because so many staff are new to the school, but there is a clear willingness and commitment by all staff to make changes for the better.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory with good features. Children enter the school at well below the expected level for their age. Achievement is satisfactory overall, although it is good in numeracy, creative and physical development. They make good progress when working in small groups led by a member of staff. Independent learning varies considerably in quality. The joint Nursery and Reception sessions are very stimulating and match children's needs and interests very effectively, with outdoor learning being as exciting as the indoor provision. Other sessions are less stimulating and, as a result, the pace of learning sometimes slows. Children's personal development is good with a very well organised teaching team supporting individuals' welfare very sensitively. There is a sensible

balance between teaching and assessing, with the latter being used well for planning future work. The induction of new children to the unit is particularly successful, giving children a very confident start to their schooling. Leadership and management are good. The coordinator has a very clear vision of how she wants the unit to develop. She is very enthusiastic and determined to continually improve provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maximise opportunities in all subjects to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Ensure that the support provided by teaching assistants is of consistently high quality across all aspects of lessons to improve pupils' progress, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Improve rates of attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that all levels of management are more fully involved in the process of self-evaluation.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as 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 below average. Children enter Year 1 with many pupils not having reached the typical level expected for their age, particularly in calculation and literacy. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been well below average for the past 2 years, mainly due to the very small numbers of pupils in these classes, with a significant proportion having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. During the past year, there has been a high proportion of pupils entering and leaving the school, many of whom have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Despite this, pupils were seen to be making good progress during Key Stage 1. This is due to the good quality teaching and learning in this key stage. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 2 and standards in Year 4 are below average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils have an understanding of the importance of keeping safe and healthy but are not as committed to carrying this out in practice. Due to the effectiveness of the school's behaviour management policy, behaviour is good, despite the high proportion of pupils with behavioural difficulties. Pupils are sensible in lessons and move around the buildings responsibly; they feel safe in school. The school has been working hard to improve attendance and rates are rising but are still significantly below average. Punctuality rates are also too low, resulting in pupils missing out on the beginnings of lessons. Pupils have good relationships with each other and with adults, and usually do their best to complete their tasks in lessons. Spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory but with some clear strengths. For example, pupils enjoy the whole-school assemblies, particularly in sharing each other's achievements. Cultural development is satisfactory but not all pupils know enough about different people and their lifestyles in the world at large. Pupils enjoy their learning and appreciate the variety of the after-school clubs. Contributions to the school community are good, with pupils enjoying taking responsibility, but contributions to the local or global community are underdeveloped. Their preparation for future economic well-being is

satisfactory. Although pupils' levels of basic skills are lower than average, they enjoy enterprise experiences, such as providing a healthy bistro to raise funds and then deciding how to spend the money.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good features. Staff all manage behaviour well and this provides a calm context for learning. Teachers identify what pupils can do when they mark pupils' work but they do not identify regularly enough how work can be improved, or link this closely to pupils' individual targets. This results in pupils being unclear of their next steps in learning. The support from teaching assistants is satisfactory overall but varies between different parts of the lessons and between different assistants. Features of the good teaching include very good links between lessons, where learning builds strongly on previous learning, and the effective teaching of basic skills within lively and creative tasks.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets statutory requirements and provides the appropriate balance between different subjects. Staff have identified the need to improve pupils' basic skills and the inclusion of a regular daily slot, with work matched to pupils' needs, is beginning to have a positive impact on their progress. However, opportunities are missed to extend literacy and numeracy across other subjects. The curriculum for personal development is satisfactory, with some interesting opportunities for developing these skills, for example through the enterprise project. The school supplements the curriculum effectively through an interesting range of out of school clubs and the visiting specialists through the sports partnership.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school uses its small size to advantage, with all staff knowing every individual well and supporting their different personal needs effectively. Child protection procedures are firmly in place and safeguarding systems fully meet requirements. Academic guidance is satisfactory but not consistent enough, with many pupils unsure of their individual targets. There are some examples of good systems, for example in science in Year 2, where pupils can easily identify their progress over time. The school is beginning to use their tracking systems more efficiently to record and monitor progress each term. Individual education plans are detailed and precise, and staff ensure that they regularly record the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a very clear educational vision which includes a commitment to promote whole-school decision making, which staff appreciate. Self-evaluation is currently a comparative weakness as it does not include all the

stakeholders. The management of the job share arrangements is good and ensures that pupils receive continuity of learning across the school week. Governors are keen to extend their roles and develop a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The sense of community within school is good, but the school is aware of the need to extend provision in local and global aspects. Despite the many changes of leadership and staff since the previous inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement because established staff work hard to support new members of staff to become a part of the team. Everyone is very keen to work with the headteacher to improve provision for the good of the pupils and the community, and there is satisfactory capacity for future improvement.

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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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
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

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/or disabilities make progress	3

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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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

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

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

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

27 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Choppington First School, Northumberland, NE62 5RR

Thank you very much for making me welcome when I visited your school for the inspection. I enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. I am writing to tell you about what I found out about your school.

You go to a satisfactory school. The staff who have been in your school for a long time are helping the new staff to understand all the different things that you do. Your new headteacher is getting to know you all quickly and she is keen to make improvements to help you learn better. All the people in your school community are keen to work together to make sure that they know all the good things about your school and all the things they need to do to make it better, and I agree it would be good for everyone to work together in this way. In the Nursery and Reception unit, the teaching team are good at helping you to learn new things, especially when they work with you in groups. You make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and the basic skills sessions you are doing now work very well. You make satisfactory progress in Years 3 and 4. Sometimes your teaching assistants work very well with you and you make good progress. I have suggested that they look at ways of helping you to make good progress all the time. You have some very interesting activities after school. I have asked the school to help you to develop your literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Your personal development is satisfactory. You enjoy your learning and your behaviour is good but, although most of you make sure you come to school every day and get there on time, there are still too many of you who do not come often enough or are late. Your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory as is your adoption of a safe and healthy lifestyle.

You are all getting to know your new staff well and you can do your best to work hard, come to school every day and make sure you are on time. I wish you all the very best for your futures.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Shepherd

Lead inspector