

Ouston Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114013
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338272
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Ann Wallis

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Tennant
Headteacher	Mrs Louise Lavelle
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Arisaig Ouston Chester le Street DH2 1RQ
Telephone number	0191 410 2599
Fax number	0191 410 2599
Email address	oustonjunior@durhamlearning.net

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited seven lessons and saw five teachers in their classrooms. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils and spoke with the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including pupils' books, the school improvement plan and pupil progress data. Inspectors analysed 50 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the rates of progress of all groups of pupils, particularly that of the more able in writing
- whether care, guidance and support and aspects of pupils' personal development are strengths of the school
- the capacity of leadership and management at all levels to sustain school improvement and build upon pupils' improved attainment and progress in 2009.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average junior school which serves the villages of Ouston and Urpeth Grange. A below average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. An average number of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and none speaks English as an additional language. The school has gained Healthy Schools status, Activemark and Artsmark.

The on-site provision for childcare, 'BusyBodies' is inspected separately and will receive its own inspection report, which is available on the Ofsted website.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school with many strengths which has improved well since the last inspection. Attainment has risen, pupils have a clearer idea of how to improve their work and their progress has accelerated. Leadership and management are good. The school evaluates its work rigorously and accurately and has a clear idea of its own strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, it has identified appropriate priorities for improvement and has good capacity to improve further.

Pupils respond well to the outstanding care, guidance and support the school gives them. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. They clearly enjoy learning because their attendance is high and their behaviour is outstanding. The school is a very welcoming and friendly place where the talents of all staff and pupils are valued. As a result, morale is high. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the wealth of varied opportunities they are given. For example; they take part in sporting activities, play with the brass band, grow vegetables or develop their outdoor skills on exciting residential visits.

Pupils are well taught and make good progress as they move through the school. Most lessons are briskly paced, teaching is lively and knowledgeable and work is well matched to pupils needs. In a few lessons, pupils have less time to be active and independent learners because they spend too long listening to the teacher. Pupils achieve well to reach above average standards when they leave Year 6. Results in national tests improved further in 2009. Pupils achieved particularly well in reading, mathematics and science but fewer gained the higher levels in writing. The school has introduced strategies to improve attainment in writing. For example, the curriculum has been reviewed to give pupils increased opportunities to write at length about interesting topics across all subjects. However, the full impact of these strategies has yet to be felt. The school promotes community cohesion well. It has a good understanding of its own community and is working towards an international award partly through its developing links with a school in France. It has yet to develop fully opportunities for pupils to engage with others from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in Britain and monitor the impact of this work.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing, particularly for the most able, by:
 - increasing opportunities for them to write about topics that particularly inspire them across all areas of the curriculum

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- making even greater use of information and communication technology (ICT) to provide further stimulus and opportunities for writing
- ensuring pupils have sufficient time in all lessons to be active and independent learners.
- Improve the school's promotion of community cohesion by:
 - providing pupils with further opportunities to engage with pupils from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in Britain
 - monitoring the impact of this work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and are very keen to succeed. In lessons they were seen to be responding enthusiastically to the good teaching they receive. They willingly answer questions and share ideas and resources sensibly. They concentrate on the task in hand, work hard and so achieve well. The good progress they make in lessons was confirmed by scrutiny of their work in books and displayed on classroom walls and by the school's close tracking of their progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive very constructive individual help from teaching assistants and teachers. Pupils consistently reach above average standards in national tests in the core subjects of mathematics, English and science. In 2009, results improved on those of 2008, although the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades in writing remained below that in other subjects. The school's strategies to raise attainment in writing are beginning to have an impact and examples of high quality such as 'Song of the Elephant' written by more able Year 5 pupils were seen during the inspection.

Several important aspects of pupils' personal development are outstanding. These include their excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, their exemplary behaviour and high attendance. Pupils enjoy good opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to their school community as members of the school council, lunch monitors and mentors for younger pupils. With their well developed literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills, pupils are well prepared for future life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory and in most lessons are good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and a range of interesting resources to explain topics clearly and engage the interest of their pupils. Consequently, pupils enjoy learning and make good progress. Lessons are well planned and structured and conducted at a brisk pace so pupils work hard and achieve well. In a few lessons the pace of learning is slower for some pupils, who are keen to be active learners and work independently, when they are asked to listen to the teacher for too long. Pupils' work is marked regularly and they are given clear feedback about how to take the next steps in their learning in order to reach their targets.

The good curriculum is reviewed regularly and meets pupils' needs well. It is very well supported by a wealth of visits and visitors to the school which all help to bring subjects to life and add to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Since the last inspection the school has successfully developed its use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. It is now building on this success and embedding the use of ICT in a more creative, topic-based curriculum to increase opportunities for pupils to write at length. Pupils receive outstanding care, guidance and support. The school knows its pupils very well and takes infinite care to look after them. There are equally excellent arrangements in place both for the smooth transition of pupils between schools and classes to those for ensuring that eating lunch is an enjoyable and sociable experience. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported by staff in school and also by specialist agencies.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders, managers and governors have high expectations of pupils and a clear vision for further improvement of the school, which is communicated well to all staff. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and they are given timely extra help when this is needed. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide both challenge and support in equal measure. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and has zero tolerance towards any form of discrimination. The headteacher and staff ensure that the talents of all children are valued whether these are sporting, academic, musical or artistic. All groups of pupils make good progress and the school is employing very effective strategies to narrow the gap in attainment at the higher levels between writing and other subjects. All safeguarding procedures are robust and staff are well trained in risk assessment and child protection procedures. The school has a good understanding of the local community and is developing links with a school in France. Opportunities for pupils to engage with pupils from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in Britain are more limited.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are supportive of the school and very pleased with the education their children receive. They speak highly of the very good care, guidance and support the school provides and several commented on how much their children enjoy and feel safe at school. Inspectors entirely agree with these views. A few parents and carers feel the school does not communicate with them effectively. Inspectors judge the school's communication with parents and carers to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ouston Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 138 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	58	19	38	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	56	22	44	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	46	23	46	4	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	52	23	46	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	58	20	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	40	25	50	4	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	56	18	36	4	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	19	38	28	56	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	48	24	48	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	44	20	40	6	12	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	40	21	42	7	14	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	24	48	21	42	1	2	4	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	54	22	44	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ouston Junior School, Chester le Street, DH2 1RQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school last week. A particular thank you to those of you who talked with us and told us about all the things you enjoy doing at school. We were also pleased to hear about how very safe you feel and how much you enjoy lessons. Please also thank your parents and carers for filling in our questionnaire.

These are some of the things we have said about your school in our report:

- yours is a good school which has improved since the last inspection
- you make good progress and your attainment is above average
- your behaviour is outstanding and you have an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe and healthy
- your school is well led and managed and you receive excellent care, guidance and support from all the staff at your school
- the teaching you receive and the curriculum you follow are both good.

These are the things we have asked your school to do now to help it to improve even further:

help you to make even better progress in writing by:

- giving you more opportunities to write about interesting topics
- making even more use of ICT to improve your writing
- giving you more time in lessons to work independently.

give you more opportunities to develop your understanding of people from communities in Britain which are different to your own.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ann Wallis

Lead inspector

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