

Finchale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130312
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	341021
Inspection dates	7–8 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Gordon Potter

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Amanda Hopgood
Headteacher	Mrs Sandra Whitton
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies and documentation, pupils' work, assessment data, monitoring records and strategic planning. They also scrutinised 35 questionnaires returned by parents as well as questionnaires from staff and pupils.

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

- the consistency of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress
- the school's use of assessment data to track pupils' progress
- the ways in which school leaders ensure that strategies for improvement are having an impact on standards.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. A few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has achieved Artsmark Gold, Activemark, Healthy Schools Award and the UNICEF Rights Respecting Award. Children commence full-time education in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the autumn term of their Reception Year. The Canterbury Kids Club, which offers morning and after-school childcare and is managed privately, is the subject of a separate inspection.

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

Finchale Primary School is a good school. Pupils' attainment is consistently above average because of good teaching and a curriculum which is increasingly well attuned to their interests, helping pupils to enjoy their learning and make good progress. Good care and support ensure that pupils' well-being, personal development and good behaviour are promoted well. As a result pupils are happy, feel safe and know how to stay healthy. While teaching is good overall, it does not promote progress consistently well in some classes. In these instances, opportunities for practical and investigative activities are delayed because teachers spend too long introducing the work or work is not well enough matched to the abilities of individual pupils. Parents are very supportive of the school. Attendance is above average. Combined with many enterprise initiatives related to the world of work, this contributes well to pupils' good economic awareness. Pupils have a developing influence on what happens in school, a good understanding of other faiths and cultures and of the multicultural make-up of modern British society as well as a good and increasing knowledge of life in other countries.

The senior leadership team has an accurate view of the strengths of the school and of what needs to be done to ensure it improves even further. Leaders have developed effective strategies for monitoring lessons. As a result initiatives to improve the curriculum and the consistency of the quality of teaching in school are beginning to ensure that the rate at which pupils make progress is becoming more even across school. The school has much data about pupils' progress and this indicates that pupils make most progress as they get older. The school is beginning to use this data more effectively to target support towards teaching in those classes where progress is less rapid. Given the good outcomes for pupils and the success of the school's strategies for improving provision, the school's capacity to improve is good and it provides good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching by:
 - sharing the excellent practices that make teaching effective in the best lessons
 - further developing the range of those learning activities that offer pupils opportunities for practical and investigative activities so that they are involved and challenged in more lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

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The extent to which pupils achieve in and enjoy their learning is good. Pupils behave very well, have good attitudes and working relationships in lessons and show great keenness to do well in their work. They especially enjoy their learning when they are involved in challenging and motivating activities such as problem solving, designing adverts, writing radio interviews or making computer animations.

From starting points in Year 1 which are broadly average in English and mathematics, pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Although good overall, progress is uneven and pupils make accelerated progress in Years 5 and 6 because teaching is strongest there and sometimes too much time is spent consolidating learning in the earlier years. In addition to English, mathematics and science, pupils' achievement is also good in sport, art, and music. In information and communication technology (ICT) pupils show great skill and confidence in using a range of applications. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and demonstrate good progress and achievement. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress as a result of effective support and teaching.

Pupils are very aware of the importance of a healthy diet and of taking plenty of exercise through activities such as dance and gymnastics. This is reflected in their keen involvement in sporting activities and the high take-up of healthy school meals. They care for one another well, have great respect for each other and for the adults in the school, and say they feel safe. Pupils are confident that they know exactly what to do in the event of a concern. Pupils willingly take on roles as mediators to support friendship problems, as playground helpers and as school council members. Designated research groups have had an influence on the development of the play park. There are good links in the local area through a wide range of charities, participation in performances and activities with local businesses. Pupils from different faiths and cultures work very well together so that their understanding of different faiths and of the multicultural make-up of modern British society is well developed. Their understanding of life in other parts of the world is good through links with a school in France and developing links with Jordan. They are equipped well for their future economic well-being because they have good skills in working collaboratively, above average basic skills in English and mathematics and great confidence in the use of ICT.

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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Despite being inconsistent in quality, teaching is good overall and has a number of strong features. Teachers make it clear to pupils what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded. They use questions very well to ascertain what pupils already know, check what they have learnt as the lesson progresses and often skilfully adapt lessons to advance learning. Marking is well done so that pupils are clear about what they have achieved and know what they have to do to improve further. Teachers use modelling, discussion, investigation and interactive whiteboard technology to engage pupils and to stimulate their thinking, for example, when a teacher was helping pupils to analyse approaches to problem solving. Lessons are well planned to include opportunities for pupils to learn through practical and investigative activities. Sometimes, teachers' inefficient use of time means that these tasks are not completed. Occasionally, there is too much teacher direction and not enough opportunity for pupils to get on with their work either independently or with their friends.

The curriculum contributes to pupils' good achievement by offering a wide range of challenging and creative activities which are increasingly well matched to their interests and abilities. It helps pupils to see the links between subjects and offers them many opportunities to apply their ICT skills and to write at length in subjects other than English, which contributes to above average standards in writing. All pupils learn French, they enjoy physical education, singing and playing a musical instrument. Occasionally, work is not well matched to the needs of individual pupils as teachers continue to adapt the curriculum to meet the new demands of mixed-age classes. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' understanding of their own and other cultures, for example,

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through visits to Durham Cathedral and Beamish Museum, and through participation in Chinese and Indian dance and the local cultural diversity festival. The school provides many activities which enrich pupils' learning and there is a strong focus on enterprise activities, such as a Dragon's Den event. They participate enthusiastically and successfully in a range of extra-curricular activities in sport and the arts.

Developing all pupils' self-esteem, respect for others and sense of responsibility is central to the school's work and is reflected well in the day-to-day life of the school and its achievement of the UNICEF Rights Respecting Award. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those pupils who speak English as an additional language, is well managed and there are effective programmes for intervention and support so that these pupils make good progress. There are well established practices to involve parents when their children enter school, good procedures as pupils move through school and very successful links with the local secondary school so that pupils are very well prepared for the next phase of their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders have a clear view of what needs to be done to make the school even better. Initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum have already improved pupils' enjoyment of school and there are detailed and appropriate plans to effect further improvements in teaching and in the use of data to support learning. The school knows itself well and plans for improvement are clearly delineated in the school development plan which is monitored regularly and to which all staff and governors contribute. Classroom teachers now have more responsibility for analysing data so that progress can be more effectively measured and areas where pupils make less pronounced progress can be remedied. There is a well organised programme of continuing professional development which shares good practice and uses the skills of staff in school to coach less experienced colleagues. The school is proud of its inclusive nature and has close links with outside agencies to support the individual needs of pupils, showing the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities, tackling stereotypes and ensuring that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times. Governors offer strong support and are very involved in the life of the school through monitoring of the curriculum and participating in and organising enterprise activities.

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The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements and there are satisfactory procedures to ensure their safety. However, some policies, while detailed, are not yet specific enough to the school's own needs. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion as pupils learn about and celebrate life in different faiths and cultures.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in Reception with skills and personal attributes that are typical for their age, although early literacy skills and some aspects of numeracy are less well developed. By the time children start Year 1 attainment is sometimes above the levels expected, although linking sounds and letters and calculation are relatively weaker aspects. Children make good progress because staff take careful note of children's interests and learning and plan effectively for each child's next steps to ensure that they are motivated to learn. Adults use resources and questioning well to enhance children's understanding. For example, during the topic on 'People who help us', lively discussion was stimulated by a box of equipment which included brushes, a pack of screws and a whistle. Children form good relationships, cooperate well during play and solve problems through negotiation. They gain independence through a well organised range of routines and activities in the caring and secure environment. They record their own attendance each morning and have open access to the outdoor learning area. Staff work closely with parents so they get to know the children before they arrive in the school and this strong partnership is maintained through regular newsletters and meetings. Leadership

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is good. Staff are ambitious and reflect keenly on how they can improve further. Key strengths and areas for development, such as extending the outside area to offer more choice and challenge, have been identified. Welfare requirements are regularly monitored and are met. Transition into Year 1 is well managed so that the transfer is smooth.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The inspection agrees with parents' and carers' positive views of the school. Most parents and carers support the work of the school and the way it helps pupils to feel safe, be healthy and enjoy their learning. They comment especially upon the way children are encouraged to respect one another and the range of activities offered to pupils. Parents and carers are also strongly supportive of the leadership and management of the school, the quality of teaching and the way the school meets their children's needs. Some parents and carers believed that communication was poor but inspectors agree with other parents who consider that this has improved and is satisfactory.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Finchale Primary 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 inspector received 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 159 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	60	15	43	2	6	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	18	51	18	51	3	9	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	31	23	66	4	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	31	23	66	5	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	46	22	63	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	49	19	54	3	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	49	19	54	3	9	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)	12	34	19	54	2	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	40	17	49	6	17	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	31	25	71	2	6	1	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	34	21	60	4	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	37	21	60	2	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	49	19	54	3	9	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



11 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Finchale Primary School, Durham DH1 5XT

On behalf of the team, thank you so much for making us welcome when we inspected your school recently.

You go to a good school which knows what to do to make itself even better. The staff care for you very well. Teachers help you learn well and tell you clearly how to improve your work. The team was impressed by the pride you take in your work, how hard you work in lessons and by your information and communication technology skills. You behave well, show respect for one another and look after one another admirably. You are polite and helpful and we enjoyed talking to you about your school. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers and appreciate the activities the school provides for you, such as enterprise days, visits and sports activities. Your parents and carers like the school very much.

I have asked your teachers to do the following things to help your school to improve:

- make sure that all your lessons are as exciting and involve you as much in your learning as the very best lessons in the school
- make sure that you make rapid progress in all your classes.

You can help by continuing to do your best and by keeping up your good attendance. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Potter

Lead inspector

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