

Heddon-on-the-Wall, St Andrew's Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122275
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327680
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Mrs Gianna Ulyatt

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	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	135
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Tiffen
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Ellis
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Trajan Walk Heddon-on-the-Wall Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE15 0BJ
Telephone number	01661 853350
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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 is smaller than most schools and serves the village and surrounding areas. The socio-economic factors are favourable. About one third of pupils come from outside the immediate catchment area and one tenth from locally based service families. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is low and very few are at an early stage of speaking English. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The percentage with a statement of special educational need is average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage receive part-time provision in the Nursery and full-time provision in the Reception class. There is a before and after school club on site which is run by a private provider and which was inspected separately by Ofsted.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and rapidly improving school. Its outstanding features are in pupils' personal development and the curriculum it offers. Its welcoming Christian ethos permeates all aspects of its work and the development of the whole child is central to its vision. This is a happy school where behaviour is excellent. Pupils eagerly embrace all that the school has to offer and put into practice the good advice that they receive about how to live safe and healthy lives. Pupils make an excellent contribution to their school and local community and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The headteacher and her staff know pupils very well. The strong partnerships with other schools and agencies have resulted in high levels of care for vulnerable pupils and for those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents wholeheartedly support the school and speak highly of the commitment of all staff. A typical comment is, 'The school provides the perfect environment for children to learn well. It is also clear that teachers enjoy their job and work well as a team.'

Standards are above average by the age of seven and are rising, representing pupils' good achievement from the time of entry. Progress through Years 1 to 4 is good and pupils overall achieve well and reach standards that are above average. However, girls tend to achieve better than boys in reading and writing. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well. Teachers plan well together and adopt a consistent approach so all pupils benefit from good and shared subject knowledge. Good and sometimes outstanding teaching accounts for the consistent progress pupils make. Relationships at all levels are excellent so pupils collaborate well with their classmates. Lessons challenge pupils' thinking skills, and pupils clearly enjoy hard work, because the range of activities offered is both interesting and varied. The exceptional curriculum, which includes an extensive range of practical activities, inspires pupils and makes learning an exciting experience. Pupils are well cared for and the school offers high level of support for all pupils. Pupils' progress is well tracked so those who are not achieving as well as expected are quickly identified and given extra support.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has successfully distributed leadership so that all are involved in school improvement. Leaders encourage innovation and creativity in developing the curriculum and engaging children in a wide range of creative ways of learning. Monitoring and evaluation informs whole school improvement and there is a clear vision for future development which is firmly based on improving standards. The school makes a good contribution to the community, particularly at the local level, and has effective plans to develop national and international links further. The senior leadership team is enthusiastic and determined to succeed. Governors are knowledgeable, well informed and very supportive. The school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and children's progress is good. Attainment on entry varies from year-to-year, but overall it is broadly average with the exception of communication, language and literacy where attainment is

below the levels expected for this age group. By the end of Reception, children reach standards that are above average except in reading and number calculation where standards are average. The school has recently introduced new systems for teaching children to recognise letters and sounds and this is improving progress particularly in reading and writing. Provision for children's learning and development is good. Adults interact sensitively with children and take learning forward. Children concentrate very well in all activities and behaviour is very good. Adults show outstanding levels of care for children. Consequently all children settle well and quickly gain in confidence. Assessment practices are well in place and the current focus is appropriately aimed at improving the key skills of early writing and number. The curriculum is well planned and provides a good range of practical first-hand experiences that has a good balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities. Children learn in a bright, stimulating classroom. The school is making best use of the area outdoors pending the completion of building work. Children thoroughly enjoyed searching for mini-beasts, examining them under magnifiers and making replicas of them with paint and dough. Overall leadership is good; however, the role is a temporary position. The team is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. It is keen to improve further and looking forward to developing further provision outdoors.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve boys' achievement in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 and 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above expectations by the end of Year 4, and pupils' achievement is good. This is because pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well supported. From starting points that are broadly average on entry to the school, pupils make good progress. This is because teaching is never less than good and the curriculum is inspiring. Standards in national tests and assessments have been above average at Key Stage 1 for the past two years. Progress and achievement in mathematics is generally better than in reading and writing. In 2008 pupils of above average ability did not achieve as well as expected. However, school data indicates that attainment for the current Year 2 and Year 4 cohorts is likely to be higher than it was in the previous year because more pupils are doing better than expected for their age. The recent action to accelerate reading and writing skills is having a good impact on overall progress and achievement. Standards are rising. The school is developing a number of strategies to reduce the gap between the rate of progress between girls and boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. In their time at school, pupils become mature, caring, and sensible individuals. Pupils willingly visit the prayer corner in the school hall for reflection, particularly when they have worries or concerns. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and show high levels of care for each other. This is illustrated in the way they willingly share resources in lessons and the way they value the achievements of their classmates. Older pupils willingly look after younger ones,

including nursery children. Pupils have high self-esteem. They are proud of their work and are very comfortable with adults. Pupils learn to swim and enjoy a range of sporting activities beyond the school day. These activities are complemented by a sensible approach to diet. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and they particularly relish the way subjects are linked together and the range of practical learning activities teachers provide. Attendance is average. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are highly responsible within the school, not just through the school council but through monthly community coffee mornings planned and organised in turn by each class. With all these excellent attributes and good basic skills, pupils are well prepared for their next stage of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with excellent features. As a result, standards are rising. Teachers question pupils very effectively to promote discussions. Consequently, pupils articulate their answers clearly and accurately in pairs and to the whole class. In mathematics, the strong emphasis on problem solving encourages pupils to think deeply and explain their reasoning in a logical, mathematical sequence. However, some class teachers miss opportunities to support children's learning in mathematics and literacy by providing stimulating and helpful displays of key words and key concepts. Relationships at all levels are excellent and behaviour is exceptional. Pupils enjoy learning. They concentrate well, listen attentively to their classmates and consider their views. They collaborate well and support each other through challenging tasks. Lessons are very well prepared with a good level of challenge for pupils of differing abilities. In sessions where adults teach as a team, pupils enjoy a good range of challenging and diverse activities. The pace of lessons is good because teachers illustrate and demonstrate new learning very clearly and provide immediate opportunities for pupils to practise new skills. Consequently, pupils play a full and active role in their learning. A particular strength is the very good support that classroom assistants provide. The marking of the children's work is good with supportive comments provided to assist understanding. Pupils clearly know what they have done well and what they next have to think about.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum has significantly improved since the last inspection. The imaginative organisation of mathematics and English as well as the daily phonics sessions planned throughout the school is improving standards and especially in reading and spelling. The school is beginning to increase writing opportunities across the curriculum to motivate boys more and improve their attainment. The school is developing a creative curriculum whereby planning is based around a specific theme. Plans link subjects together but make sure that the appropriate skills are taught. Pupils say they enjoy learning this way because it is fun and they can easily make meaningful links across subjects. Parents, too, are supportive of this approach as one commented, 'the topics chosen have really engaged my child and we have regular discussions about what he has done in the day.' Pupils speak enthusiastically about

the impact external visitors have on their learning. They enjoy the worthwhile visits to places of local interest, including castles, because their understanding is secured. They enjoy learning French. Good links with local partnerships enhance pupils' sporting and cultural opportunities and pupils willingly participate in the extensive range of extra-curricular activities. These widen their options and add an extra dimension to their physical and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good with outstanding elements. There is a high level of support for pupils with individual needs, as one parent commented, 'The school has been outstanding in identifying my child's needs and in outlining an appropriate curriculum.' The school offers particularly good support to pupils from locally based service families. These pupils are welcomed so they settle well to learning and quickly make friends. Arrangements for child protection, risk assessments and safeguarding pupils are all in place and understood by staff. The school has robust arrangements for tracking pupils' progress and teachers set very clear individual learning targets that are checked and reviewed regularly. This ensures that any child who lags behind, or who is experiencing difficulties, is quickly identified so additional support can be quickly given. Pupils with learning difficulties have individual plans with measurable targets. Pupils of above average ability are well challenged. The school knows that boys achieve less well than girls and is beginning to address their needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Through strong leadership, the headteacher encourages innovation especially in curriculum delivery. She has empowered and developed the senior team well so they undertake their responsibilities efficiently and conscientiously. Teamwork throughout is very good and staff are well focused on providing the very best for all pupils to ensure standards continue to rise. Expectations for pupils' personal development are particularly high. The school evaluates itself accurately and the monitoring of teaching and learning takes place on a regular basis. As a result, the senior team have introduced new schemes and programmes to ensure consistency to improve standards. The outcomes are already evident, especially in reading and writing where more pupils are achieving at the higher levels. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity and makes very good use of staff and resources to ensure that all children achieve successfully. The school contributes very well to community cohesion at the local level. The school evaluates the effectiveness of its provision and has plans in place to develop further national and international links. Governance is good; governors are knowledgeable, well informed and very supportive. They monitor provision and challenge the school well. Improvements since the last inspection are good. Staff are enthusiastic in their approach and very pleased about the success of new initiatives. As a result, the school has good capacity to further improve.

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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?	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 effectiveness of boarding provision	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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

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	3
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	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.

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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



21 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heddon-on-the-Wall, St Andrew's Church of England First School, Northumberland, NE15 0BJ

I had a very enjoyable time in your school. You are very welcoming and friendly. It is good to see you growing up into confident young people. I particularly liked the conversations I had with you in your classes and around the school. It is good to see older pupils caring for the youngest children in the nursery. Try to keep up this good work so the next group of new children enjoy playing and learning with you. In your school everyone is welcome, especially those who arrive at different times of throughout the year. No one is left out.

I know you work very hard and it is good to see you getting good test results. However, in reading and writing boys do not achieve as well as girls. Your school is determined to change this situation. Therefore boys in particular have a very important part to play. You must work even harder at reading and writing, so standards improve and your parents and teachers can be really proud of you.

I was pleased to see how well you behaved in lessons and around the school. I can tell you really love learning and enjoy school. You work well with your classmates and really help one another. The school knows you very well and tries to match your work to your individual ability, so no one gets left behind. You enjoy topic work, long writing projects and you are very quick thinkers in mathematics lessons.

I know your teachers work very hard to provide interesting work for you. Your art work is beautiful and your singing is wonderful. I know you thoroughly enjoy having visitors to your school and going out to see the lovely castles in the area. You are very fortunate to live close to the ancient Roman wall and many of you told me how much you enjoy learning about past civilizations. You are very good at organising community coffee mornings. This is giving you a good insight into running a business.

Thank you again for being so helpful. I hope you continue to enjoy your education.

Yours faithfully

Gianna Ulyatt
Lead inspector