



Malvin's Close First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 122262
 LA Northumberland

Inspection number 281206
 Inspection dates 13–14 December 2005
 Reporting inspector Mr Dave Byrne

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

Type of School	First	School address	Albion Way
School category	Community		Blyth
Age range of pupils	3–9		Northumberland NE24 5BL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01670 354082
Number on roll	333	Fax number	01670 368546
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Elizabeth Freeman
Date of previous inspection	May 2000	Headteacher	Ms Julie Bowman

Age group 3-9	Published December 2005	Reference no. 281206
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school that educates 333 pupils, many of whom are disadvantaged. The vast majority are white British and none requires support for learning English as an additional language. Children enter the nursery with skills that are below average for their age. The proportion of pupils with learning or physical difficulties is average, but the percentage eligible for free school meals is above average. The school has training-school status and is very closely involved in training both serving and trainee teachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

This is an outstanding school, as the pupils and their parents know well. Children make an excellent start to their education in the Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 2, standards are very high and pupils' excellent progress continues in Years 3 and 4. This is because of high quality teaching that sets very high expectations for all pupils across an excellent curriculum. The only aspect of learning where pupils could do better is in using their very good achievement in writing in all subjects. Excellent use of assessment makes sure that pupils of all abilities work at levels that match their needs. Pupils get outstanding enjoyment from their learning because their lessons are exciting and relevant, and their ideas and opinions are valued by staff. Personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is very good and pupils form very good relationships. They receive outstanding care, guidance and support for both their personal and academic development. Inspirational leadership by the headteacher, supported by a very dedicated team of staff, governors and parents, constantly seeks ways to improve the school. The school's own evaluation of its work is very rigorous and leads to continual improvement. It gives excellent value for money and has a very good capacity to continue to improve.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' skills in writing at length in subjects other than English.

Achievement and standards

The school judges achievement and standards to be outstanding overall, and inspection evidence fully supports this judgement. The school is extremely good at meeting the needs of all pupils. As a result all groups of pupils, including the more able and those with learning, behavioural and physical difficulties, make exceptionally good progress. From a below average starting point in nursery, pupils progress rapidly so that, by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are much better than the average either for similar schools or for all schools nationally. This remarkably good progress continues in Years 3 and 4 and high standards are maintained. Pupils write well in English, but their writing in other subjects is not as good.

Achievement is outstanding, not only in English, mathematics and science but also in art and design, design and technology, and history. It is good in geography and information communication technology (ICT). A particular strength is pupils' work in the performing arts, especially dance and drama.

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. This judgement confirms both the school's own assessment and parents' opinions. Pupils clearly love school and this, plus imaginative initiatives such as the 'Every Second Counts Club,' results in attendance that is just above the national average. Excellent levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are achieved. An ethos that values academic and personal success creates confident and secure pupils who love learning and willingly take responsibility. Pupil councillors and playground buddies take their roles seriously. Behaviour is very good and often exemplary. This is reflected in the tremendous care that pupils show to others and in the enormous pride they have in their school. Pupils work together very well. Whilst discussing Christmas traditions, Year 4 pupils used debating skills that far exceeded expectations for their age.

The curriculum is enriched very well by a wide range of imaginative activities such as the Coffee Café, and a very good range of educational visits and visitors. It prepares pupils extremely well for their future lives and develops a good understanding of other cultures. The Healthy School and Active Mark awards reflect pupils' keen awareness of how to maintain good health through diet and exercise. Pupils feel safe and adopt safe practices to a very high level.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

The school's judgement that teaching and learning are outstanding is shared by inspectors, parents and pupils. The lessons seen were almost always at least very good and frequently exceptional. From the time children start school in the nursery, teaching and support staff respect their individuality and very successfully build up their confidence and self-belief. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to set very thoughtful tasks that often combine skills from a number of subjects. Pupils relish finding out new things and sharing ideas and thoughts. They are never given easy answers; instead they are expected to

question everything and to believe only their own evidence. A group of Year 2 pupils was shocked that an inspector seemed unaware that the events of the Fire of London are known to be true because of an eye-witness account in the form of Pepys' Diary!

Exceptionally good use of assessment ensures that activities match the needs of all pupils. As a result, boredom in lessons doesn't exist, and all groups consistently achieve their best rate of learning. Very good marking involves pupils in setting their own targets for improvement. Homework is often imaginatively planned and is very popular with most pupils.

Grade: 1

Curriculum and other activities

Inspectors agree with the school that its curriculum is outstanding. This judgement is reinforced by the number of externally validated awards gained by the school in the arts, sport and basic skills. A very exciting curriculum in the Foundation Stage lays an excellent basis for children's education. In Years 1 to 4, very effective adaptations to the way subjects are planned release the creativity of staff and pupils. In planning, great emphasis is given both to learning facts and to finding out and gathering evidence. Subjects are planned to be relevant to pupils' lives. The very good emphasis on English, mathematics, science and ICT benefits learning in many subjects, although too little time is given for pupils to write at length in other subjects. The curriculum is very well adapted to meet the needs of both the more able and those with learning difficulties. A wide range of educational visits and visitors, and of lunchtime and after-school activities, adds to learning opportunities in many areas, including sport and the creative arts. Very thoughtful planning of provision for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education very successfully promotes their growing awareness of the importance of issues relating to personal safety, drugs, sex and relationships.

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support

The school rightly views its provision as outstanding. Exemplary provision for health and safety is very well organised, with very good practice in risk assessment. Pupils' involvement in identifying potential hazards promotes their strong incentive and ability to stay safe. Procedures for child protection fully meet requirements and very effective strategies keep absence to the minimum. Staff take every opportunity to promote pupils' personal development, health and well-being, and consistently provide the support pupils need to make sure they are happy in school. Work with parents is outstanding. It provides

comprehensive information about the school and the progress of each child. The support and guidance provided for pupils' academic and personal progress are excellent. Assessment systems are very well refined. They provide accurate information for reporting to parents and for developing precise targets for each pupil's further success.

Grade: 1

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher is inspirational and has the total respect of pupils, staff and parents. Together with a very strong senior leadership team, she ensures that the school is totally focused on providing the highest possible quality of education. There is no complacency, no acceptance of any negative impact of social deprivation and no excuses for not getting pupils up to standard. All staff accept high levels of responsibility, and authority but within a very supportive and caring framework.

The school's aim of including all pupils is very successfully achieved because of the relentless attention given to pupils' academic and personal development. The school constantly seeks to improve what it does. Procedures for self-evaluation are exceptionally thorough and include consultations with staff, pupils, parents and governors. As a result, exciting initiatives have established the school as a centre for teacher training. Resources are good overall but aspects of the accommodation are only adequate. Some rooms are very small and others, such as those in the Foundation Stage, result in teachers having to make do. The governors are very much part of the school's success. They give exceptional support to the school whilst also keeping a watchful eye on its effectiveness. The school has responded very well to its last inspection and has a very good capacity to improve in future.

Grade: 1

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16–19
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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?	1	
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	

Achievement and standards

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

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 behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	
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?	1	

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily.	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise.	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse.	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health.	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place.	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism.	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them.	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships.	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them.	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community.	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills.	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams.	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in Key Stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form.	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy.	NA

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Malvin's Close First School
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15 December 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful during our recent visit. We are pleased to say that you have a superb school where everyone gets on very well together. The smiling faces and keenness to learn in lessons are memories we have taken away with us.

You are very lucky to have such good teachers who work very hard to give you exciting lessons. You are often made to think very hard and find things out for yourselves, and this seems to spur you on to learn even more. You do extremely well in your reading, writing, mathematics, science and ICT, and you also do well in art and design, design technology, history and geography. We found little that you could do better, except your writing in subjects other than English.

We were impressed by the way you care for others and do your best to keep healthy through eating properly and exercising. It is good to see that so many of you enjoy the very good range of clubs you can go to and that very few seem to need to go to the 'Catch Up' Club.

We feel that your school is a happy family with everyone involved, you as pupils, your parents and of course the staff. Your headteacher cares so much about your school and knows each and everyone of you very well. The way you help by offering your own opinions as part of the pupil council is very much appreciated by all staff.

Every day is special. We hope that you carry on making the best of your time at the school and continue to help each other and the teachers and support staff who are there to help you.

Yours faithfully,

David Byrne, Kathryn Dodd and Geoff Cooper. (your inspectors)