

Newsham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122261
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	380436
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Sheridan HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	448
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Grant Davey
Headteacher	Anne-Marie Armstrong
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2008
School address	Warwick Street Blyth NE24 4NX
Telephone number	01670 353124
Fax number	01670 353124
Email address	anne-marie.armstrong@northumberland.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed learning in 21 lessons taught by 16 teachers. Inspectors met with teachers, school leaders, members of the governing body and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement planning, pupils' progress data, work in pupils' books, policy documents, behaviour records and documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors considered the views of staff, pupils and 85 parents and carers through returned questionnaires and letters.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively have leaders maintained strengths in pastoral care during the period of reorganisation?
- How effectively has the school tackled gaps in attainment evident between boys and girls?
- To what extent has previous underachievement been eradicated?

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school that has undergone significant changes since the last inspection when it was a first school. The school has amalgamated with another first school, become a primary school and moved into a new building. There have been a high proportion of teachers who have joined the school over the last three years. The proportion of pupils starting or leaving the school at times other than the usual transition times is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. Most pupils are White British. The school has several accreditations, including Investors in People and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This school provides a calm and welcoming environment. Pupils enjoy school and feel exceptionally safe because they are cared for and valued exceptionally well. Pupils are polite, well mannered and keen to contribute to the excellent atmosphere within school. A real pride exists in the school and pupils get on very well together. Both new and long-standing pupils and staff feel a shared sense of belonging and ownership of this new school.

Attainment is low but improving. Last year's leavers did not reach the levels of attainment expected and boys did particularly poorly. Data and work in books for the current Year 6 show that pupils are on track to reach improved standards of attainment and this represents satisfactory achievement overall from their low starting points. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve in line with their peers. There is clear evidence that boys are beginning to close the gap with girls, although there is still some way to go before their attainment is in line with that of the girls. The school's tracking system shows that recently introduced extra support to help pupils catch up is having a further impact on closing the gap and raising standards of attainment.

While much of the teaching is good, a significant minority of lessons remain satisfactory and these are less effective at enabling pupils to make up for previous underachievement. In good lessons seen, pupils buzz with excitement and enjoy being successful in their learning. In these lessons there is a clear focus on what is to be learned and teachers plan activities that both challenge and interest different groups. Good lessons are usually fast moving so pupils remain highly engaged. In these lessons, adults have high expectations and pupils willingly grapple with challenging subject matter. As a consequence, they make accelerated progress.

In satisfactory lessons, pupils are not expected to work at the same brisk pace. In some lessons, teaching assistants are unsure of their role in supporting pupils. Too many of the activities in these lessons are only adequately challenging and teachers are, at times, reluctant to challenge pupils to improve their work. In satisfactory lessons, teachers tend to praise pupils even when they have only succeeded moderately well in relation to their abilities. In a small number of lessons, teachers and teaching assistants miss opportunities to challenge poor work or simple mistakes and this limits the progress pupils make in developing basic skills.

Senior leaders have led with determination through a period of significant and prolonged change. Systems for ensuring pupils stay safe are exceptionally robust and effective. Outstanding Early Years Foundation Stage provision means that pupils are entering Year 1 ready for the next stage in their education. Recent improvements to the curriculum have been designed to tackle the underachievement found. Work to maintain and develop the strong pastoral ethos found in the predecessor first school has had a significant impact on pupils' readiness to learn. The care, guidance and support pupils receive are outstanding. While there are significant successes and strengths in leadership, too many areas of school improvement are led directly by the most senior leaders and this limits their capacity to hold a clear overview of the effectiveness of school improvement. Consequently, their self-evaluation, while broadly accurate, is too rooted in recent actions rather than the impact provision has on outcomes for pupils.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress, particularly for boys, so that standards of attainment are near to the national average by May 2012 by:
 - ensuring pupils consistently receive good quality feedback that helps them improve their work through marking in books and guidance in class
 - designing all lessons to be brisk, challenging and have a clear learning focus
 - making sure teaching assistants have a clear understanding of their role in every lesson
 - using good practice seen in school to model and develop consistently high expectations.

- Redistribute some of the developmental and operational responsibilities held by senior leaders so they have more time to monitor, evaluate and direct effective school improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy their learning a great deal. This is particularly evident in the lessons where they are challenged well and need to work hard to meet the teacher's expectations. In a Year 1 lesson children bounced with excitement as the teacher challenged them to count forward and backwards between one and twenty. Many pupils made mistakes at the beginning of this session but, because of the teacher's highly effective feedback, most were counting confidently after a short period of time. In many other lessons, pupils work hard and are keen to succeed. Pupils are less successful and less motivated when the activities are not closely matched to their needs. In some lessons pupils are unclear about the purpose of some activities and, while they work hard, they do not focus as clearly on how they could improve their work.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe in school. They have a very secure understanding of what constitutes safe and unsafe situations. Pupils take on responsibility for promoting safety around school. Safeguarding monitors have been trained to spot dangers and point these out. Pupils take a very proactive approach to recognising how their behaviour and actions influences their safety and the safety of others. Pupils generally behave very well around school and enthusiastically in lessons. There are few occasions where inappropriate behaviour is seen and these incidents are dealt with effectively so that the atmosphere remains highly appropriate for learning.

Pupils have a good understanding of staying healthy. They understand the importance of a healthy diet and taking part in regular exercise. Pupils enjoy the good range of extra-curricular clubs and these are well attended. Pupils' attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly and most arrive punctually.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

While about half the teaching in school is good, it remains satisfactory overall because too much does not accelerate learning quickly enough to completely eradicate underachievement. Satisfactory lessons provide a sound set of experiences so all pupils make progress. However, the work expected of pupils in some lessons is not rigorous enough or carefully matched to their needs to stretch them sufficiently to catch up. In some satisfactory lessons, praise and positive marking is given too often and this is counterproductive when pupils receive this despite them not producing their best work. In the best lessons seen, pupils make progress at a rapid pace because teachers' questions are precisely targeted; using information the teacher has about the next steps individuals need to make. In these lessons pupils have a strong trust in the adults they are working with, act on the advice they are given and work hard to improve their work.

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

The curriculum is good. Several key changes have been made fairly recently in response to the low standards of attainment seen. Provision for teaching reading and letter sounds has been improved so that pupils are taught in a systematic way with other pupils of similar ability. A good range of intervention strategies and small-group support sessions are helping groups of pupils catch up. Enrichment activities in the curriculum are plentiful. All children in Key stage 2 play an instrument, there are a wide range of experiences and visits and there is a high uptake of extra-curricular activities that pupils enjoy. The curriculum effectively supports the development of pupils' personal and social skills. Pupils have effective opportunities to reflect on their behaviour and on how they contribute to the school community.

The care, guidance and support pupils receive are strengths of the school. Pupils are known exceptionally well as individuals and the school is relentless in supporting their social and emotional development. Potentially vulnerable pupils are very well supported by the school, working in partnership with parents and carers, and other agencies. Several case studies demonstrate the school's ability to ensure that individuals facing challenging circumstances are very well integrated into school life and supported effectively. Attendance has improved year-on-year as a result of the swift and effective action taken to challenge absenteeism.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 share a common goal in building a school where pupils are well cared for and enjoy learning. Much time and energy has gone into developing systems in recent times to ensure a smooth transition between being a first school to being a larger primary school. Leaders have managed the establishment of the new school building and ensured the amalgamation of the schools and the induction of new staff was smooth. All this was done successfully. However, too many of the day-to-day management structures are reliant on senior leaders, particularly the headteacher. As a result, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and academic standards has been underdeveloped. Leaders have moved quickly to take action to support rising standards of attainment. However, the most senior leaders still find themselves overburdened with day-to-day management roles and this prevents them leading the sharp, timely and evaluative monitoring that would prevent attainment slipping again. Too often, monitoring of the school's work focuses on what is being done and does not explore the effectiveness of school improvement strategies, particularly in relation to teaching and the use of assessment information to support learning.

Leaders have a clear view of the needs of the school community and have developed, through their careful planning, a cohesive school community. Leaders recognise the need to engage further with the local community and communities

beyond Blyth to support pupils in developing an understanding of diversity beyond their immediate experiences.

The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's position. They monitor the work of the school and have been influential in managing the changes that have taken place. However, the governing body are, at times, too quick to trust the school's leadership and, as a result, they lack robustness when challenging school performance.

The school promotes equalities satisfactorily. The school has taken appropriate action to tackle inequality where it exists, such as in the achievement of boys compared to girls. Safeguarding is outstandingly well organised and effective. Everyone in school is well briefed and takes responsibility for safeguarding young people. Systems are exceptionally well set up and meticulously maintained. The school regularly communicates with parents, carers and pupils about safeguarding and this has a positive impact on the school's ability to keep pupils safe.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

There are many significant improvements in the provision as a result of the well-designed new building and very well-placed development of staff. Typically, children arrive in the Nursery with skills that are low in comparison with expectations for their age. Children very quickly settle into a routine and enjoy the exciting and stimulating range of activities organised on a daily basis. Children can be found happily engaging in a range of activities including water play, modelling, problem solving, early writing, counting, movement to music and construction. Adults work very well in supporting individuals and groups with their chosen activities, modelling good use of language and encouraging talk. Useful notes are taken daily and these are used to design the activities for the next day, taking into account different children's interests and learning stage. Children show high levels of independence and cooperate very well. Positive behaviour is exceptionally well developed. Sessions for teaching early reading and letter sounds are enjoyed by the children and they make very good progress in these.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is very well led. Staff are trained well and supported in their roles so that they all contribute effectively to the excellent experiences children receive. Relationships with parents are very strong and these lead to a purposeful partnership between home and school. Overall, the continually improving provision is driving up standards of attainment so that pupils entering Year 1 are increasingly ready for the next stage in their education.

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	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers were highly positive about the work of the school. Many highlighted the school’s warm friendly approach. Inspectors found that the school is a very caring establishment with high levels of pastoral care, guidance and support. A significant number of parents and carers wrote to inspectors to tell them about the positive additional support their children received in overcoming particular challenges. A very small number of parents and carers wrote to inspectors stating the systems for ensuring their children’s needs were met were not sufficiently robust. Inspectors were unable to investigate individual concerns but found, through several case studies, that the school’s systems for supporting potentially vulnerable pupils were very strong. A few parents and carers expressed some concerns about academic rigour. Inspectors’ findings would support this view, although the evidence clearly shows that the school is improving in this area.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Newsham 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 inspection team received 85 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 448 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	55	35	41	2	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	63	74	19	22	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	45	41	48	4	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	46	43	51	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	54	64	30	35	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	46	40	47	5	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	44	46	54	2	2	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)	40	47	43	51	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	56	33	39	1	1	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	42	38	45	7	8	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	45	40	47	3	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	48	56	32	38	0	0	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	60	30	35	1	1	1	1

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 all 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



16 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Newsham Primary School, Blyth, NE24 4NX

You may remember that I came to visit your school recently with three other inspectors. This letter is to let you know what we found out.

We found that your school is a satisfactory school. Your school does some things very well. We found that you were looked after very well and, as a result, you feel very safe. We found that your teachers are very warm and friendly and this makes your school a lovely place to be. We were very impressed with the activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage. We found that children in here did very well and were given fantastic support by the adults who work with them.

We have asked your teachers to make sure you all do as well as you can in all your lessons. In some lessons your teachers are very good at giving you guidance on how to improve your work. In other lessons, you do not get the same helpful guidance so you are less clear about how to make your work better. I know that sometimes your teachers tell you how wonderful you are, even when you have not done your best. I have asked your teachers to make sure you always do your best and, even when you do, they are going to tell you how you can make your work even better.

I have asked your headteacher and deputy headteacher to keep a very close eye on how well you are doing. Sometimes these people are too busy doing other things, so I have asked them to look at the responsibilities all leaders have so they can share out some of the jobs and spend more time thinking about how to make your school even better. I am sure you will all want to help by doing your best in lessons and listening hard to the advice and guidance your teachers give you.

I would like to finish by thanking all of you who we spoke with during the inspection. You were all incredibly polite, well behaved and welcoming. You are a real credit to your school and parents and you have my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector

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