

Hipsburn First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122264
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327676
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Mr Derek Sleightholme

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	69
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Styring
Headteacher	Mrs Dot Charlton
Date of previous school inspection	May 2006
School address	Lesbury Alnwick Northumberland NE66 3PX
Telephone number	01665 830210
Fax number	01665 830210

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small rural first school serving a coastal village. Numbers are rising with a good proportion of pupils admitted from outside the immediate locality. Although most pupils are White British, a significant minority represent a range of cultures and faiths. Few are at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in one Reception class.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school providing very good value for money. 'We are delighted with our daughter's progress at Hipsburn. She comes home full of ideas and is inspired by the things she has learnt and done at school', is a typical comment that reflects most parents' high regard for the school. The headteacher provides clear and unambiguous direction for the work of the school. She is supported by an enthusiastic small staff team who collaborate together very effectively. The school is even better than reported previously and is very well placed to improve further. It clearly meets its declared aim to enable learners to 'think for ourselves and care for others' because pupils make excellent progress both academically and personally.

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. In their time at school pupils become friendly, mature and polite citizens. They are proud of their school and keen to show visitors around. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of being healthy and staying fit. Through their efforts the school has gained accreditation as a Healthy School and the Activemark. Pupils feel very safe because they have quick and easy access to adults who provide them with excellent care. They have responded very positively to an initiative whereby each week through the random selection of their names written on a lollipop stick they are matched with a learning 'lollipop partner'. Pupils love school activities and their attendance is good. They have a real voice in the school and in community initiatives. These opportunities prepare them very well for the future.

Teaching is outstanding. Pupils are challenged well. Lively exposition and appealing methods keeps pupils alert and attentive. Teaching is founded on very well understood principles of how children learn, delivered through an outstanding, rich and vibrant curriculum. Subjects are linked very effectively together allowing key skills to be taught through the full range of learning experiences. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, access excellent support provided by skilled, sensitive teaching assistants. Pupils benefit from very good academic guidance.

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. The school has excellent monitoring systems to judge its own effectiveness and its self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders set challenging targets; their development planning is first rate. Leaders recognise the value of excellent partnerships that they have secured not only through the exceptional support of the 'Friends of Hipsburn School' but also their professional links with staff in other local schools. This year school leaders were faced with managing staff absence affecting both leadership and teaching. This has been tackled exceptionally well through systematic planning, drawing on an excellent partnership with a neighbouring school and using this as a prime opportunity for two-way professional development. Leaders promote cohesion well. Their success is typically summarised by a pupil who when asked about the benefit of working with a 'lollipop partner' replied, 'Its good to mix and you learn much about each other'.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage **Grade: 2**

Provision is good. Most children are admitted to the Reception class with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. Children often start with good number recognition and counting ability and much lower writing skills. Teaching is good and children make quick gains across all areas of learning. Progress is outstanding in personal development; children enjoy school and play well together. Each morning they 'sign in' to register, listen to instructions, follow routines and behave well. If they need help they confidently approach adults trusting them to provide personal support.

Learning and development is good. Planning strikes an effective balance between adult-led and child-selected activities. In a teacher led activity, children listened and watched intently as a traditional African story was read to them. They paused to imagine the taste of fruit they could see on big colourful pages. Later a group of children independently re-enacted the story outdoors; some dressed up in traditional costumes while others experienced handling a mango, pineapple and basket of oranges. Progress is good and by the end of Reception almost all children reach the expected early learning goals for their age; some regularly exceed them. As a consequence, most children enter Year 1 with above average skills and attainment.

Welfare is outstanding. Dialogue with parents occurs informally each day. Assessment practices are managed well, staff aware that observations of children's independent learning provides strong evidence of progress. Daily routines are carried out with high levels of consistency. Care and supervision are thorough. Leadership is good. The headteacher currently provides a strategic overview of provision and is carefully monitoring provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no issues for improvement where the school is not already taking action.

Achievement and standards **Grade: 1**

Achievement is outstanding. Children enter Year 1 with above average standards. All achieve equally well and make outstanding progress from Year 1 to Year 4. Current standards in Year 2 are well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Current standards in Year 4 in English, mathematics and science are significantly higher than the level expected for pupils at this age. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make very good progress.

In the 2008 assessments at the end of Year 2, results were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of 2008, Year 4, school assessments in English, mathematics and science were well above what would be expected for pupils at this age. An exceptional feature is that, since the previous inspection, the school has established a consistent trend of very high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The outstanding achievement and excellent results stem from school leaders unwavering attention to raising standards by promoting high quality teaching and setting very challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are very reflective; in class assemblies they think about personal qualities that make them special individuals. Being healthy is very important to pupils. They enthusiastically participate in the regular 'Wake and Shake' programme. They value its important contribution to their overall fitness.

Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning and love school activities. Pupils know the staff care for them and they feel very secure at school. At playtime they are eager to use the outdoor facilities. They are keen to welcome visitors to the 'dens' they enthusiastically build from twigs and small branches. A particular strength is pupils' willingness to take part in the 'lollipop partner' initiative knowing this helps them to make lots of friends from different places.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to community activities. They forwarded suggestions to the Action Group set up to improve a local play facility and they produced and performed in a ceilidh after having fiddle and whistle lessons. Pupils have a strong record of fundraising having raised substantial funds for a local hospice. Given pupils' high achievement in key skills and their excellent personal qualities, they are very well prepared to cope with life ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching has an outstanding impact on learning over time because teachers have an excellent understanding of how children learn. School leaders have managed current temporary staffing arrangements very well ensuring high quality learning is maintained. Subject knowledge and expectations are high, relationships are brilliant and assessments methodically undertaken. Lessons are highly enjoyable occasions because the activities engage the interests of pupils and the tasks are usually very well matched to individual pupils' needs. The teaching of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is exemplary. This has resulted in pupils making consistently outstanding progress especially in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. In one lesson discussions about the life cycle of frogs was steered to specifically engage the interest of some boys who are at times reluctant writers and succeeded in motivating them to complete their tasks. Challenging questions keeps pupils, especially the more able, on their toes and helps them to make strong progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. Provision for the basic skills is excellent; it ensures that all groups make very good progress in English, mathematics and information and communication technology. Topics are used very effectively to improve thinking and apply basic skills across subjects. For example, a practical science activity provided a very good opportunity for pupils to express opinions by drawing on their knowledge of the properties of materials such as lentils and flour. Pupils predicted and tested the degree to which some of these cooking ingredients appear to 'pour'

like liquids. The school makes exceptional use of visits, visitors and themed days to enrich pupils' learning. Currently pupils are benefiting from the artistic talents of a voluntary helper who has guided and helped them to produce high quality portraits. Pupils' awareness of the rich cultural history of the local area has been extended through working with a local historian. Their understanding of different cultures is well extended by drawing on the first-hand knowledge of those from diverse backgrounds within the school. The curriculum is enriched further through a good range of extra-curricular opportunities which develop pupils' special interests and talents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, support and guidance are outstanding. Procedures for safeguarding, child protection and risk assessments are diligently undertaken and meet requirements. 'I cannot fault the caring, nurturing attitude of the staff', is a parent's comment that sums up the excellent consistency of approaches to pupil care.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from intervention strategies confidently and sensitively delivered by experienced teaching assistants. A particular strength is the personalised attention provided to individual pupils. Taken together these factors make an important contribution to the very good progress that pupils with low starting points make towards the expected standard for their age.

Excellent guidance provides pupils with clear direction on how to improve. Pupils are directly involved in setting some of their own targets. Their written comments in individual 'Target Books' confirm many have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. The school is encouraging pupils to think about their own progress by applying simple checks that help them measure their own success. The school has plans to extend this practice as a development of the 'lollipop partner' initiative.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. Important outcomes of leadership are that the pupil roll is rising, standards have risen and are being sustained at a high level and attendance is improving. Self-evaluation is an accurate, though slightly modest reflection of the school's work. The process is based on strong, shared vision and responsibility. It draws on the views of all stakeholders and regularly takes into account the views of pupils and parents. A particular strength is the excellent development planning that plots how key actions will contribute to both raising standards and the 'Every Child Matters' personal development agenda.

School leaders have grasped the opportunity to promote good cohesion that arises from diversity within the school population. They have evaluated how they could draw on the experiences of this small but quite rich range of backgrounds to promote awareness of cultural differences and tolerance. One important outcome is the 'lollipop partner' personal development initiative which has had a very positive impact on how pupils relate and care for each other.

Governance has improved since the previous inspection and is now outstanding. Governors bring a professional approach to discharging responsibilities and operate in the challenge and support role very effectively. With very good improvement since the previous inspection the school is very well placed to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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

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.

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	2
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	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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

11 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hipsburn First School, Northumberland, NE66 3PX

I inspect many primary schools and yours is one of the best I have visited. You attend an outstanding school. Thank you for helping me. I enjoyed meeting you, visiting your classrooms, looking at your work and talking to you about your school. You were friendly and polite and I was impressed by your excellent behaviour and good attendance.

These are the things I found out about your school during my visit. All the people who work in school are doing a good job and it is a happy, smiley place to be. Your parents told me how much they value the excellent care, individual support and guidance you receive. Your personal development is outstanding. You told me you know it is important to be fit and healthy. I know you feel very safe because you know you can get help quickly if you need it. You told me how having a 'lollipop partner' helps you make new friends and learn a lot about each other's backgrounds. You play together very well and some of you are very talented at building dens at playtime! I know you have had a real say in helping to improve your school and the local area.

Your school leaders have devised a teaching and learning programme for you to follow that makes learning interesting and challenging for you. I know from lessons, your books and photographs how much you enjoy the many excellent curriculum activities that are provided. You are set challenging targets because the staff know you can achieve very well and make rapid progress. You play your part by working hard in lessons. Consequently you all make outstanding progress. It impressed me that that by the end of Year 2 you are working well above the expected level. You maintain this high standard by Year 4. Well done!

I wish you and all the staff the very best for the future.

Derek Sleightholme
Lead inspector