

Humshaugh Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122295
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340117
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Mr Andrew Scott

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided School
Age range of pupils	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Penny Steele
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Steele
Date of previous school inspection	January 2007
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Age group	5–9
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one inspector. He visited six lessons, taught by the school's two class teachers; in all, about a third of the inspection time was spent looking at pupil's learning. The inspector held meetings with governors, staff and the pupils. He also analysed the school's documentation, progress data, welfare arrangements and the 21 questionnaires that were returned by parents, as well as those from pupils and staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' achievement from Reception to Year 4 as influenced by assessment and the level of individual challenge
- standards in writing
- the impact of the everyday curriculum on pupils' outcomes, including their awareness of the wider world
- the capacity of leadership and management at all levels to bring about and sustain improvements.

Information about the school

This is a very small rural school, with a settled pupil population. All pupils come from two adjacent villages and the surrounding area, and are from White British families; none are eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities varies and is currently broadly average. The school has two classes; two of the three teaching staff were appointed in September 2009. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Reception class in which the children are taught alongside pupils from Year 1.

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

This is a good school. Some aspects are outstanding. It is a happy, positive place with a supportive, family atmosphere. Its excellent quality of pastoral care and strong focus on academic achievement mean that pupils feel very secure, behave extremely well and acquire a good work ethic. Pupils are very thoughtful and get on with one another impressively; older pupils automatically look after the younger ones. The good leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the school has built successfully on its previous strengths and has improved well since the last inspection.

Pupils make good progress throughout the school because of good teaching. Standards have improved and, whilst above average over time, they are even higher at present. Standards in mathematics and reading are especially good. Standards in writing are not quite as high, but above average. Technical skills, such as spelling and handwriting, are good but pupils' writing often lacks a rich vocabulary and a range of expression because they have not been given enough chance to write in different contexts. Teachers often provide interesting activities in lessons but do not make shrewd enough use of lessons across the curriculum to strengthen skills. Mostly, teachers have good expectations of pupils' learning, planning is efficient, assessment procedures are comprehensive and the curriculum provides a good coverage of topics. Teachers are developing flexibility in their planning to meet the many different needs within the mixed-year classes, but such practice is not yet consistent enough.

The school fosters a strong sense of community. Every pupil is part of an unofficial school council, so all play a part in the school's development. They are relaxed in giving their opinions and all just muck in together. For example, pupils of all ages worked together to clear snow and ice from the yard at break times during the inspection. Their close interaction with the local community benefits their social skills and sense of belonging. The school is aware that it needs to move more quickly to improve pupils' links with the world beyond the locality and their understanding of its diversity.

The school evaluates its own provision accurately. The headteacher and governors are well aware of how the school needs to improve and its development plans reflect clear thinking. Recently, the school improved its facilities to provide a computer suite, suitable work areas for staff and a bright new environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Standards have risen because of more effective

teaching and curriculum, and the unfolding plans to spread leadership responsibilities among all staff are already paying dividends, notably in standards. Therefore, the school shows that it has good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and breadth of pupils' learning, especially in writing, by:
 - ensuring that all work is more carefully tailored to meet the individual needs of pupils
 - providing more opportunities to strengthen skills across the curriculum
 - developing a stronger awareness of the wider world and its many cultures.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy their learning and have good attitudes to work. When lessons are particularly interesting, they show intense concentration. Pupils in the Reception and Year 1 class were totally rapt when listening to a story about aliens. Pupils work sensibly on their own in groups and are respectful of others' opinions. They do not need constant supervision by staff, although their pace of work is not always as fast as it could be.

Standards overall are above average and pupils' progress is good, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. At Year 2, standards have been high in recent years and remain very similar at present, especially in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing are a bit lower. In Year 4, two years ago, standards were broadly average and falling. Last year, there were no pupils in the year group. In the current class, pupils are making good progress and evidence from the school's data and their work books show that they are on course to maintain the high standards they achieved in Year 2, especially in reading and mathematics.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are very courteous, considerate and friendly. They feel extremely safe in school, not only because staff take outstanding care of them, but also because they take considerable care of one another. Cooperative work in lessons is second-nature and mutually beneficial, for the most part. Pupils enjoy exercise, whatever the weather, and understand how to live healthily, although only older pupils have a clear understanding of a good diet. Pupils have a quiet confidence; they acquire a high moral code and appreciation of spirituality. Their participation in the St Wilfred's Pilgrimage Day is a good example.

The school community is harmonious and cohesive. Pupils know their views matter to staff and so feel valued. Links with the local community are rich and varied. For example, pupils participate in the village fêtes and a Christingle service in a local church; their collection for Harvest Festival was rich in produce. The links with the wider world and its different cultures are less well developed. All in all, pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment	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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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 skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good. Good induction for new staff and cohesive planning ensure common strengths within classrooms. Effective assessment systems, which include pupils' own self-assessment, result in a mostly good level of challenge. The positive learning atmosphere in the classrooms stems from a warm and respectful rapport between staff and pupils. Consequently, pupils relax and work well. Teachers are good at varying lesson activities to accommodate the different learning styles of pupils and ensure that pupils know exactly what they have to learn. Sometimes, though, the challenge is not fine-tuned enough to suit all the different abilities. At other times, especially when introducing new topics, teachers teach all the pupils in the mixed-year classes together which limits the pace of learning.

The curriculum is good. It is based on a solid framework, enriched by an interesting range of activities outside the classroom. Good use of the local area broadens learning experiences. Teachers often diversify learning experiences similarly in lessons but not routinely enough to boost further pupils' skills and general knowledge. This is certainly true of writing, but also in mathematics, because there is insufficient scope for pupils to learn mathematics in 'real-life' situations. Equal access to the curriculum for all pupils ensures that they all achieve equally well.

The school takes excellent care of pupils. The close-knit family ethos enables all staff to know all pupils' needs extremely well and respond accordingly. Pupils know that the staff have their best interests at heart and will readily turn to them for advice. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to be independent but know that a gentle word or soothing support are always on hand to ease any pains or anxieties. Close links with external agencies provide specialist support efficiently, when required. The formal procedures of care are very thorough, although the governors are aware of a need to streamline the formal recording of risk assessment procedures.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Good leadership, especially by the headteacher, has enabled the school to maintain its strengths during a period of major staffing changes. Indeed, the school has strengthened much of its provision because it has efficient and well understood systems of management. For example, the headteacher and governors are very efficient in reviewing and updating the many school policies. Procedures for safeguarding pupils, including child protection arrangements, are very rigorous. It is common for the headteacher of such a small school to carry most of the management responsibilities, but the recent staff appointments are enabling such responsibilities to be delegated more equitably among staff.

The school's improvement has been underpinned by a well-structured and pertinent development plan. Its priorities rightly focus on such matters as new management roles and further development of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision. The governors maintain a suitably watchful eye on the school and are aware of its strengths and how it can improve. The open relationship between the school and governors makes for healthy and frank debate about how the school is run.

Partnerships with agencies outside the school are good. The school makes considerable effort to keep parents well informed of its activities and responds sensibly to their views. A book is kept in the front hall in which parents can write comments. Several parents help once a week in school with activities such as sewing, cooking and German. Support from the local authority and their agencies has been effective in helping pupils with specific emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties.

The school treats all pupils equally. There are no regular disparities in achievement between any groups of pupils and those identified as falling behind are swiftly helped. Individual talents, such as singing, are encouraged. This equality extends to the school's community spirit. All pupils have the same status in voicing opinions about school. The school is a natural focal point of the local community and so is intrinsically involved in its life. The school has plans to widen the scope of its community work, but they would benefit from a greater sense of urgency.

These are the grades for the 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	1
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 benefit from a good start to school in their Reception Year. The school has just redesigned and updated the facilities for the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is now more scope for children to initiate their own learning, ensuring enough variety of activities overall. Staff direct learning when appropriate and provide a clear focus to learning at the start of each session. Sometimes, though, they do not intercede to guide children quickly enough when, for example, they lose concentration.

The rapport between staff and children is very positive, much as it is elsewhere in the school. Reception children benefit greatly in their social development because they work alongside older pupils. They also make similarly good progress because the level of work expected of them is good. An informal but very informative assessment system is effective in helping staff to monitor children's progress. They tend to start school with abilities and knowledge above those expected of four-year-olds, but this varies. Attainment on entry has been lower in the past two years. Language is not as strong as other areas of learning when children start but the relentless focus in class means that they catch up during the year. They make good progress and exceed expectations for their age by the time they enter Year 1.

Welfare arrangements are as secure as in the rest of the school. The leadership is good. It is currently shared and is benefiting from the headteacher's experience, fresh ideas from new staff and informative training.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents think highly of the school. A high proportion returned the questionnaires and almost without exception sang the school's praises. A number of them highlighted the quality of care, the community spirit, the approachability of staff, the happiness of their children, their academic progress and their social development. The inspector endorses these positive views. The inspector found little evidence to support one parent's concern about activities during wet playtimes.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Humshaugh Church of England First 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 **21** completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 33 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	81	4	19	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	76	5	24	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	52	10	48	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	57	8	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	14	67	6	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	62	8	38	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	48	9	43	2	10	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)	11	52	9	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	52	9	43	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	38	13	62	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	43	12	57	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	43	11	52	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	67	7	33	0	0	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 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 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>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.



15 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Humshaugh Church of England First School, Hexham, NE46 4AA

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the recent inspection of your school. I very much enjoyed my two days at Humshaugh, despite the awful weather, and really appreciated all that you told me about your school. Your opinions matter.

I agree with you that yours is a good school. Some parts are excellent, such as the great care staff take of you. It is no surprise that you feel extremely safe and helps to explain why your behaviour is outstanding. The school has a warm, welcoming family atmosphere. I was impressed by the way you all get on together and by your consideration for others. Your good attendance and positive attitudes in lessons clearly show that you enjoy learning and appreciate what the school offers you.

Your progress has improved in recent years and is now good. Standards are high in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. This is because teaching and the curriculum are good. Teachers expect good work from you, are very supportive and monitor your progress carefully. They make many lessons interesting but I would like the school to ensure that all lessons have opportunities to improve your basic skills, especially writing. I would also like the school to make sure that all your work is challenging enough. You told me that sometimes your work is too easy.

Your headteacher, staff and governors work hard to improve your school and have been successful. Not only have standards improved, but changes to the building have given you a new computer room and better facilities for Reception children. New assessment systems are helping you to understand how well you are doing in lessons, as I saw for myself. The school's sense of community and the links with the villages are very good. However, I have suggested that the school speed up its work in helping you to improve your knowledge of the wider world and all the many different traditions and cultures out there. I am confident that you would enjoy such activities, as well as responding eagerly to more challenging work in lessons.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely
Mr Andrew Scott
Lead Inspector

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