

Bedlington The Station First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122177
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314231
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Gordon Potter

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Elison
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Mulholland
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2005
School address	School Road Bedlington Northumberland NE22 7JQ
Telephone number	01670 822326
Fax number	01670 826810

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of below average size for its type and most pupils are of White British heritage. The school serves an area of well above average social deprivation. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. At the time of the inspection, an acting headteacher was in place.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Bedlington The Station First School is a good school with some outstanding features. All pupils achieve well because teachers make learning exciting and fun. The school is at the heart of the community and cares deeply for its pupils, giving them outstanding care and support. Parents hold it in high regard and appreciate the way their children are helped to feel safe, secure and enjoy their learning.

From starting points well below those typical for their age, pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and continue to make good progress as they move through the school. Standards have been broadly average since 2004. The school's results in the 2007 national assessments for Year 2 pupils were average in mathematics and writing but below average in reading. Fewer pupils reached the higher levels in reading and writing than nationally. The results of tests conducted by the school in 2007 for Year 4 pupils show that pupils' attainment was broadly average, including in reading.

Outstanding relationships and sensitive support from a caring staff strongly promote pupils' good personal development. Pupils know that there is always someone to turn to if they need help. Attendance is average. This reflects an improvement which is the result of pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding; they are well behaved, polite and courteous. They readily take on responsibilities, and older pupils look after younger ones and contribute well to developments in school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and stay fit, as the school puts good emphasis on these qualities. The school's focus on developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, along with the pupil's confidence in working with others, prepares pupils well for their future lives and education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons stimulate pupils' enjoyment and ensure they make good progress. There is some outstanding teaching, especially in Years 3 and 4, that helps pupils to make accelerated progress in those classes. Teachers use assessment information well to set targets for pupils to improve and to tailor their lessons to the pupils' individual needs. The good curriculum meets requirements and is enhanced by a good range of well planned and stimulating activities, although the school does not offer sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects. There is a good range of popular after-school clubs and activities.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's progress and the effective model of shared leadership encourages others to develop their leadership roles. There is a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and specific detail in planning to show how initiatives will be implemented. The governing body has made an outstanding contribution to the school's development by providing exceptionally high levels of challenge and support. There have been good improvements since the last inspection, especially in the Foundation Stage and in pupils' attendance. The school has a good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children's skills and understanding on entry to the Nursery are well below what is typical for their age, with the lowest skills being in language development and early mathematical skills. As a result of carefully planned induction procedures

and stimulating learning activities, children settle in quickly and make good progress in their learning. By the time children enter Year 1, the majority have reached levels below what is expected for their age. They make the most progress in emotional development and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Children are well nurtured and cared for in a safe and stimulating environment. The curriculum is well planned with a good range of exciting activities that support new learning both indoors and outdoors. However, the separation of the outdoor area prevents its use being continuous throughout the day. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are good and adults plan well together as a team. Effective planning is based on good understanding of how young children best learn and the meticulous assessment of children's skills and abilities. As a result, children develop increasing levels of knowledge and skills and become more confident and independent. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are quickly identified and support provided.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing for potential higher attainers across all areas of the curriculum.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop higher level reading skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 4. Since 2004 the trend has been of broadly average standards at the end of Key Stage 1, reflecting the continuing good progress that the pupils make in Years 1 and 2. The school's results in the 2007 national assessments for Year 2 pupils overall were average, although results were below average in the higher levels for reading and writing. Standards in writing were average overall, but below average in reading. Pupils' progress accelerates in Years 3 and 4 because teaching is often outstanding. While standards in nationally comparable tests remain broadly average, pupils make greater progress than that achieved nationally. This is good in relation to their starting points. Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make as good progress as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, and social development, are good. Pupils have a good understanding of the cultural diversity within Britain today and of their local heritage. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils enjoy coming to school, are excited by their lessons, work hard and are friendly and polite. They say that they feel safe and secure and that there is no bullying, confirmed by inspection findings. Pupils know how to stay healthy; they eat healthy lunches and appreciate the opportunities to take exercise. The school has worked hard to improve attendance and the majority of pupils attend regularly and punctually. There are good opportunities to contribute to the school family and beyond. Pupils have a good awareness of the local community and the needs of others. They show this care by regularly raising funds to help others. Older pupils look after younger ones and are keen to take on responsibilities, especially in discussing and planning school projects, such as improving the playground. Good enterprise activities and the development of group work skills help prepare pupils well for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and sometimes outstanding so that all pupils make at least good progress. Teachers prepare lessons that generally meet the needs of all learners, although the more able are not always stretched enough in reading and writing. Clear learning objectives and individual and group targets ensure that pupils know what they have to do in their work. Marking is good and it shows pupils what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. The children enjoy their lessons because they are interesting and fun. A range of techniques, including problem solving and talking in pairs, holds pupils' attention and gives lessons pace. Teachers use skilful questioning to encourage pupils to think more deeply. Relationships in classrooms are good and behaviour is outstanding because pupils are actively involved in their learning. There are many opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning, although there are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length and the presentation of work is sometimes unsatisfactory. The school is good at meeting the needs of pupils who have difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants offer good support for such pupils and this extends to assisting all pupils in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets statutory requirements and takes account of national initiatives and guidance. There is a strong emphasis on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Pupils have ample opportunities for exercise, including through extra-curricular activities. Personal development is well supported and developed, including through social, health and citizenship education and the social and emotional aspects of learning. Teachers help pupils to see the links between subjects although the curriculum currently offers too few opportunities for pupils to write at length in different subjects. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' thinking skills and creativity, especially in philosophy, design technology and art. French is taught to all pupils in the two oldest classes. Pupils' personal and academic development are well supported by a good range of enrichment activities including a wide range of popular extra-curricular opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. This begins when Nursery staff visit children at home before they start and continues throughout the pupils' time in school, so that they are happy and excited about learning and prepared for their future education. All members of staff know the pupils extremely well and are aware of their needs and how to meet them. Support for vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is both sensitive and effective. There are strong and effective relationships with the many outside agencies who work with the school. The health and safety of all children are paramount and all necessary child protection and safeguarding requirements are in place. Close social and academic links with the local middle schools ensure pupils are ready for their new school. Procedures for tracking pupils' academic development provide an excellent overview of the progress they make over time. This is further strengthened by the effective use of challenging

targets that are shared with pupils and parents and which are having a significant impact on pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team, has a clear view of the school. Self-evaluation is therefore accurate and is reflected in a school improvement plan with appropriate areas for development and detailed planning about how its targets will be achieved. All leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning, including evaluating pupils' work, to ensure that pupils are doing as well as they can. The school uses data effectively to identify the needs of all pupils so that work can be provided to support them. The school sets and achieves increasingly challenging targets for pupils across the school. The exceptionally committed governors provide outstanding support and rigorous challenge to the school. There is clear evidence that their contribution has made a significant difference to school improvement, in particular helping to raise standards in the Foundation Stage and improving attendance. Parents overwhelmingly support the work of the school and appreciate what it does for their children. The school has effectively removed the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection, especially with regard to the Foundation Stage and by increasing attendance. It has a good capacity to 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 the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bedlington Station First School, Northumberland, NE22 7JQ.

Thank you so much for making us welcome when Mr Jackson and I visited your school. Bedlington Station First School is a good school with some outstanding features. The staff care for you extremely well and help you to learn because they want to make your lessons fun and exciting.

We were pleased to see that you work hard and do your best. You come to school regularly and on time and all of you behave well in lessons and in the playground. We think that your behaviour is outstanding. We found that you are very polite and helpful and we enjoyed talking to you about your school. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that you like your teachers. You said you appreciate the activities the school provides for you like the visits to outdoor centres and theatres. Your parents and carers like the school very much, especially the way your teachers care for you and help you to enjoy your learning.

It is important that you improve your reading and writing if you are going to do well in school and when you are adults. Your teachers are planning to give you more time to write in all your subjects and to give you books to read that help you to develop your skills step by step.

You can also help by reading at home on your own and with your parents.

Thank you for all your help and I wish you every success in all you do in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Gordon Potter

Lead inspector