

Bedlington Station First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122177
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	359183
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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 of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Ellison
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Mulholland
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. As well as short visits to parts of lessons, six teachers were observed in extended visits to 11 lessons. Inspectors observed morning assemblies, examined a variety of examples of pupils' written work and held meetings with a governor, teachers and a group of pupils. They scrutinised the school's child protection and safeguarding documentation, information about the curriculum, notes of meetings, development plans, and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors received and analysed 28 questionnaires from parents and carers, 43 from pupils in Key Stage 2 and 20 from members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The attainment and progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage over the past three years.
- The attainment and progress made by pupils in Years 1 to 4 in 2009/10, and how well pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve.
- How well the school has developed its arrangements to promote community cohesion.

Information about the school

The school is a smaller than average size primary school. An above average number of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. An above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities although none has a statement of special educational needs. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The school has gained Healthy School status, the Activemark, the Artsmark, the Basic Skills and Northumberland Digital Learning awards.

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

Bedlington Station First School provides its pupils with a good education. Under the clear and purposeful leadership of the headteacher, the staff team successfully works to encourage pupils to uphold the school's values of endeavour, respect and consideration. As a result, behaviour is excellent. Children thrive because care, guidance and support are outstanding. Highly fruitful partnerships contribute substantially to the school's popularity with parents and carers. School leaders and the governing body diligently evaluate their work and pay close attention to fostering constant improvement. They have successfully resolved the issues raised at the last inspection, notably improving pupils' writing, and since then have sustained pupils' good progress to raise standards further. Development planning places a strong focus on improving learning. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

Pupils develop self-confidence, work industriously and enjoy lessons. Children begin Nursery with abilities and skills that typically are well below those expected for their age. Pupils generally make good progress throughout the school. However, in Key Stage 1 boys do not always do as well as girls and in Key Stage 2 records indicate pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make overall satisfactory progress though a large majority made good progress in writing. By the time pupils leave Year 4 their attainment is as expected for their age. Positive attitudes to learning and considerate conduct prevail in lessons and around school. Pupils are polite, courteous and happy. An exceptionally high number say that they feel perfectly safe in school. They are very aware of all forms of bullying and know to let an adult know immediately if they have any concerns. Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development stems from many opportunities to reflect, consider others and to explore their heritage. Work within the curriculum to develop community cohesion is developing but pupils have limited opportunities to grasp the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the world.

Good quality teaching, effective use of resources and a variety of interesting tasks maintains pupils' involvement. Pupils thoroughly enjoy carefully planned novel and exciting activities which successfully link learning in different subjects and foster their personal development. However, not all teachers fully extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Marking pupils' work is not always consistent and opportunities are missed to strengthen basic skills and point pupils to the next level. Teachers do not always sufficiently encourage pupils to indicate in their books that they have followed advice on how to improve their work. Productive partnerships with outside agencies and neighbouring schools make a vital contribution to supporting pupils and enhancing sporting and cultural activities.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help more pupils, particularly boys and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make greater progress and reach higher levels of attainment by:
 - taking every opportunity to extend reading, writing and mathematical skills throughout all curriculum activities
 - giving pupils more precise pointers to improve their written and mathematical work
 - encouraging older pupils to indicate in their books where and how they have followed their teachers' advice and how their work has improved as a result.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to experience and understand the diversity of belief and culture throughout the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils take part enthusiastically in lessons and assemblies. They are attentive and quickly become thoroughly engaged in activities. Pupils take pride in their work and write neatly. They happily contribute to discussions with partner-pupils and the class and avidly take an active part in assemblies. Although data indicates attendance is average it has been affected by childhood illnesses over which the school had no control and most pupils attend regularly. Their good achievement is a reflection of how much they enjoy their education and are keen to do well.

Attainment on entry to school is generally well below what is typical for this age and overall progress is good. Standards in Year 2 have been average in all subjects in recent years with an improvement in the numbers gaining the highest level in mathematics. In 2010 boys' standards slipped below girls' in all subjects and reflected the fact that boys are not always making enough progress. Attainment is rising in Key Stage 2 and pupils are overall meeting age related expectations by the end of Year 4. A recently introduced literacy initiative to enhance work linking letters and sounds has improved pupils' progress and attainment in reading and especially in writing. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make overall good progress. Although a large majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Year 4 made good progress in writing last year, their overall progress in reading and mathematics is satisfactory.

Healthy School status reflects pupils' good grasp of what healthy living involves. They participate keenly in physical activities and sport. Pupils develop confidence and responsibility from the wide range of opportunity to enhance the school community, for example, as playtime buddies to support younger pupils' development and to suggest ways to augment lessons. Pupils' well-developed social skills and average basic skills provide a sound basis for their future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	3
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 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?

Teachers and teaching assistants work together diligently to plan interesting lessons. They make good use of information about pupils' earlier learning and overall activities match pupils' abilities. In the most effective lessons, pupils maintain their interest and work hard. They contribute substantially through discussions with classmates and to feedback exemplary aspects of their work. Occasionally though, teachers do not always make the best use of time and insufficient time is available to consolidate and reinforce learning which is especially important for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Although teachers always praise pupils' accomplishments when marking their work, they do not often require older pupils to show in their subsequent work how they have followed the advice on how to improve.

The curriculum is relevant to pupils' interests and broadens pupils' experience well by reflecting the particular circumstances of the school. Innovative thematic approaches, which pupils enthusiastically recall, and which have been used as a model for other schools, bring together learning in several subjects. Pupils have many opportunities for applying their basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, although these are not always extended. Participation in the creative partnerships initiative, and the contribution of visitors, and visits, such as to Alnwick Castle, local museums and faith centres, all increase pupils' awareness of their cultural heritage and local communities.

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

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In this very caring school, pupils are all known extremely well. When necessary, they receive expert individual counselling and support that enables them to thrive. Admirable activities in the 'Rainbow Station', an innovative indoor and outdoor facility, make a key contribution to fostering emotional development and excellent behaviour. The school takes great care to help children make the transition from home into the Early Years Foundation Stage, into Year 1 and ultimately on to the nearby middle school. A very strong partnership with parents and carers and effective procedures has reduced persistent absence and improved attendance to above that of similar schools.

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 and management underpin the school's ambition to improve attainment and progress. The focus on raising the quality of teaching and making the curriculum more creative have been successful and standards are rising. The school sets challenging targets for pupils' progress each year and ensures a large majority of pupils reach them. Senior leaders and the governing body are unremitting in fostering excellent care and support. Staff work well together under the experienced direction of the headteacher in a school which is well organised, with routines that are clearly understood by adults and pupils.

The governing body is effective. It is well informed, based on knowledge gleaned from a carefully planned programme to see pupils at work. Detailed reports and reviews from senior leaders also inform the governing body. The governing body are not yet directly involved in school self-evaluation. Raising standards and improving pupils' progress are priorities in the school's development plan. However, it is not clear how success is to be measured and this makes it difficult for the governing body to evaluate success.

Good practice and diligently followed procedures for safeguarding assure the welfare of all pupils. Well managed procedures for child protection include ensuring that all staff are carefully vetted for working with children and have undertaken up-to-date training. Pupils are well aware of up-to-date aspects of safe conduct, such as those relating to responsible use of ICT. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily and is well aware of the need to address the recently emerging differences between boys' and girls' attainments in Key Stage 1 and in the progress by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Key Stage 2.

The school works extremely successfully with parents and carers and keeps them well

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informed of school activities and events. Outstanding partnerships with health and support agencies, nearby schools, the church and community organisations greatly enhance the quality of education. Following a thorough analysis, the school makes a sound contribution to community cohesion with plans in place to widen pupils' awareness of life beyond the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for 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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The range of abilities when children start in the Nursery class is generally well-below those expected for their age. At this early point in the new school year they have already developed confidence and quickly settle to routines. Throughout Nursery and Reception, children play and work happily together and enjoy learning. Although by the end of Reception standards in personal development and communication, language and literacy skills are below average, for almost all children this represents good progress. Their progress in mathematical development is notably good.

Children benefit from very skillfully managed care, good teaching and interesting activities which incorporate a good balance between those they can initiate themselves and those led or supported by adults. Attractive, spacious, indoor and outdoor facilities are resourced well and encourage learning. Teaching develops all aspects of children's learning and takes good account of their abilities and development. For example, skilful questioning cleverly reinforced the language development of a group of recently admitted Nursery children at this early time in the new term.

Good leadership and management ensure continuity of children's learning. Good

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relationships and close attention to safeguard children's welfare prevail throughout. Conscientious and rigorous assessment builds accumulative records of children's progress into individual journals of learning. They provide a useful medium for planning further activities for children. Assiduously managed arrangements, coupled with helpful information leaflets, strengthen a productive partnership with parents and carers. They are well-informed about their children's progress on a day-to-day basis and through regularly scheduled meetings.

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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A lower than average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires and almost all were very supportive. The inspection endorses their views. Parents and carers were unanimously happy with their child's progress and experience and that the school keeps their child safe. Almost all are pleased with the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Other than to comment on misbehaviour before and after school, of the few who wrote, all were very positive about the care provided for their child and how much their children enjoy school. During this inspection, pupils' behaviour in class and around the school was exemplary.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bedlington Station 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 inspection team received 28 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 151 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	82	5	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	79	6	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	57	12	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	68	9	32	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	82	5	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	71	8	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	71	8	29	0	0	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)	18	64	9	32	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	75	7	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	54	12	43	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	50	14	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	71	8	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	86	4	14	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 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. 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>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 pupil's 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.



20 September 2010

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for your welcome when we visited your school recently. We were delighted to see how much you enjoy all the activities arranged for you and we were particularly impressed by your politeness and courtesy. You are extremely well behaved in lessons and around the school. We were pleased to see how you contribute to school life and help others, for example, as playground buddies. I know the headteacher and all the staff are very proud of you.

Your school gives you a good education. All the adults in the school look after you exceptionally well and that is why you told us you feel safe. Standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average, as they have been for some time now. Most of you make good progress but boys do not always do as well as girls. In Year 4 we saw some improvements this year compared to the year before. Most of you make good progress although some of you who need special help do not always make as much progress as possible. When we looked at your books we were particularly impressed with your writing. I have asked your teachers to help more boys and those of you needing special help to make faster progress and reach higher levels. You can all help by following your teachers' advice. To widen your knowledge further, I have also asked your school to help you to find out about the beliefs and way of life of people in other countries and those from many backgrounds who now live in Britain.

You have many opportunities at Bedlington Station First School to learn about life and these help you to prepare for the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector

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