



Harbottle Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122292
Local Authority Northumberland
Inspection number 292360
Inspection date 28 November 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Shepherd

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	First	School address	Harbottle
School category	Voluntary aided		Morpeth, Northumberland
Age range of pupils	4–9		NE65 7DG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01669 650271
Number on roll (school)	20	Fax number	01669 650271
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Margaret Ward
		Headteacher	Mrs Sue Joyner
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
4–9	28 November 2006	292360

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school serves both the small village of Harbottle and the families living higher up the Coquet valley. It is much smaller than average. The social and economic circumstances are very varied. Standards on entry to the school are broadly average but vary considerably from one year to another and the pupils have a wide range of ability. There is a smaller proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities than average and there are no pupils from minority ethnic groups. The Nursery is shared by two schools, children from each school attending on alternate weeks. During the inspection, children from the Nursery were in the other school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. The headteacher, staff and governors have a great commitment to ensuring the school works in harmony with the local community in a Christian context. They turn the small size of the school to great advantage, promoting learning within the framework of one big happy family. This results in pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. Parents greatly appreciate this and one wrote, 'The whole ethos of the school is built around respect.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have a very good understanding of keeping healthy and safe. Their behaviour is excellent and they thoroughly enjoy their learning. The pupils' readiness to work in teams, take the initiative and make decisions is well developed. Along with good basic skills of literacy and mathematics, this prepares them effectively for the future.

Achievement is good. The provision for the Foundation Stage is good and pupils achieve well. Teaching and learning are good and a large number of adults help in lessons to provide well-focused support for individual pupils. These good features ensure that the pupils make good progress. The curriculum is well balanced and meets every pupil's needs. Standards are above average, although they are higher in reading than writing. The teaching of reading is very good, but opportunities are missed to develop pupils' spelling and handwriting skills and to reinforce the development of writing in other subjects.

The school's care and support for pupils are outstanding. Staff know every pupil very well and work in close partnership with parents and outside agencies to meet their needs. Guidance for personal development is outstanding and good for academic development. The school monitors pupils' progress very effectively and pupils evaluate their own progress.

Leadership and management are good. They are highly successful in promoting the pupils' personal development and well-being, and extending the work of the school into its community. The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate and shows what needs to be improved. The headteacher has a very clear vision of how she wants the school to improve and she works systematically to manage change. Staff are fully behind her in supporting developments as are the governors. This has led to good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the provision of new buildings and computers. The school has a good capacity to make further improvements in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give more prominence to the teaching of writing, particularly handwriting, and provide more practice in writing in other subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is consistently good through the school for both boys and girls. This is due to good teaching and to the very effective individual support provided in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are carefully targeted for additional support and make good progress. The school uses the mixed-age groups well. Younger, more able pupils strive to match the standards of the older pupils and the oldest of the more able pupils thoroughly enjoy responding to the additional challenge teachers set them.

Standards are broadly average on entry to the school but there is a wide range of ability and several children have speech and language difficulties. The children make good progress and by the end of Reception, their communication skills have improved; they exceed the expected level in personal, social and emotional development and achieve the expected level in all other areas of learning.

Pupils make good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. The variations in attainment and small numbers of pupils in year groups mean that the national test results vary considerably from one year to another. For example, the Year 2 test results can fall below average when the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in the year group is higher than usual. Because the results vary so widely from one year to another there is no clear pattern. The 2005 national tests of Year 2 pupils were above average overall. They were significantly above average in reading and above but not significantly so in writing and mathematics. The 2006 results were similar to those of the previous year. The inspection shows that the pupils' writing is generally good: it is imaginative, free and natural but not quite as good in its technical aspects, such as spelling and handwriting. In Year 4, standards are above average for the pupils' age and many pupils achieve National Curriculum levels expected of older pupils. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have a good level of scientific knowledge and carry out investigations with great confidence and enthusiasm.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school uses all the advantages of small size to ensure very high levels of personal development and well-being for every pupil. Each individual has a very secure understanding of his or her place in the school community and the outcome is one big happy family with pupils demonstrating excellent standards of behaviour. Older pupils relish the responsibilities they are given and treat younger pupils with great sensitivity. Pupils are extremely confident when contributing to school life because their comments are greatly valued. This great sense of community within the school is also clearly evident within the valley community. Pupils appreciate these links. They welcome local visitors into the school with great enthusiasm and thoroughly enjoy their visits out in the community. Pupils are preparing extremely well for their future economic well-being. They function smoothly within teams and are keen to take the initiative. They have an excellent understanding of keeping healthy and thoroughly enjoy their

daily 'Wake up and Shake up' sessions. They have a comprehensive understanding of keeping safe, particularly near water. This is important as they live so near to a river. Attendance rates are good, despite the long distances some pupils have to travel. The school promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development extremely well through its Church of England status. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers organise the mixed-age classes very effectively. They handle whole-class sessions well to make sure every pupil is included in new learning. The partnership between adults works very well and ensures that pupils have regular one-to-one sessions carefully focused on their needs. This results in a consistently good rate of progress. Teachers use resources well, particularly the interactive whiteboards, which promote visual learning effectively. The teachers provide interesting and purposeful tasks that pupils are keen to complete, such as investigating different types of soils or writing instructions for baptising a baby. The teaching of reading is very good. The teaching of writing is good too and encourages the children to write freely and imaginatively. However, the teaching of handwriting is not quite as good as the teaching of reading or narrative writing. Homework is set regularly and helps pupils to develop reading, but homework to develop writing is set less frequently. Staff are very good at accepting pupils' responses and then using them to extend the learning of the whole class. The day-to-day assessment of the of the pupils' work, including marking of older pupils' written work, is very effective.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with outstanding features. The school's new three-year planning cycle for the curriculum works very well and ensures that pupils have time to consolidate their learning. The school is evaluating the new organisation carefully and is now in a good position to create stronger links between writing and other subjects, which the school agrees could help to raise standards even higher. The organisation of staff to teach the same subject through the week is very efficient and results in an understanding of exactly what each pupil has achieved and also ensures that the pupils build securely on their previous knowledge. The school uses its improved information and communication technology facilities well to extend pupils' basic skills. The introduction of a new phonics reading system is having a positive impact on reading. The planning for developing the expression of pupils' own ideas and imaginative writing is good but, despite the school's emphasis on handwriting, this remains as an aspect for further improvement. The school provides excellent opportunities for enriching the curriculum through links with the community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, support and guidance are good with outstanding features. The systems for care and support are excellent. Staff know each pupil extremely well and every adult works together very effectively to support this aspect of pupils' development. The school has high-quality partnerships with external specialists. It values the links with parents, who have a very high opinion of the school. Safeguarding systems are in place. Guidance for personal development is outstanding. The school monitors pupils' progress effectively to show which pupils need extra help, and the pupils themselves are involved in the evaluation of their progress. Although the marking of pupils' work is very effective, and summary reviews of the pupils' progress helps them to understand better what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management are good with some outstanding features. The headteacher is extremely effective in providing for pupils' personal development and well-being within a christian context. She has a clear commitment to raising standards and to extending the work of the school within the context of the community. She manages to combine her own teaching and her management of the school very well. The work of the governors is also good. They value the process of working with the headteacher in carrying out the school's self-evaluation, and this works well. They play a very important role in supporting the school in raising funds, for example, to extend the buildings. Members of staff, despite being part-time, play an important role in managing their subjects and are all very enthusiastic about improving their areas of responsibility further. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Despite the unavoidably high cost per pupil the school provides good value for money. In particular, it educates pupils who achieve well and have excellent personal skills, and ensures that it plays a key role in the community.

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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 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?	2

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.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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	2
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

Harbottle Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Harbottle

Morpeth

Northumberland

NE65 7DG

28 November 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you very much for welcoming me into your school and answering all my questions so politely.

I was really impressed with how well you all work and play together. You are like one big happy family. You look after each other, with the older pupils taking responsibility for the younger pupils. You thoroughly enjoy your learning and your behaviour is excellent. You really appreciate being part of the school and valley community. You look forward to all the different visitors that come into your school and the interesting things that you do on your visits out of school. Your headteacher, staff and governors all work very well together and make sure that your school keeps improving. They take good care of you and help you to learn about keeping safe and healthy. Your school dinners are delicious and your Wake up and Shake up sessions are very impressive.

You work very hard at your reading and you write interesting stories but I think that you could work a bit more on your handwriting and spelling. The teachers and I think that they could review your progress from time-to-time in reading, writing and mathematics with you, perhaps each half term, to help you to understand what you need to do to improve your work.

I really enjoyed my visit to your school and I hope that you all do your best in future to make it an even better place to learn.

Best wishes

Maggi Shepherd

Additional inspector