

Fulwell Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108764
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	324830
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	0
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Hilary Hartnack
Headteacher	Mrs Marian Stromsoy
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ebdon Lane Fulwell Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR6 8ED
Telephone number	0191 5535548
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Fulwell Infant School is bigger than most primary schools. It serves an area of favourable social and economic characteristics. Pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and that of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below average. Very few join or leave the school at times other than the start or end of an academic year. The school has a number of awards, including the Healthy Schools award and the Artsmark Silver award. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises Nursery and Reception classes.

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. It has outstanding features. These are seen in the effectiveness of provision in the Nursery, pupils' personal development and the academic progress made by vulnerable pupils and the quality of care and support they receive. Parents who returned the questionnaire were fulsome in their praise of all the school does. They saw their children as making good progress because they enjoyed school and felt safe and well cared for. Inspection evidence supports this.

Standards are well above average and pupils' progress and their achievement in relation to their above average starting points are good. The rate of progress has accelerated this year and Year 2 pupils are on course to exceed 2008 standards. Pupils' personal development is outstanding because the school prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage in their education, giving them the basic skills to learn independently and collaboratively, fostering their excellent behaviour and encouraging self-reliance. Science and the physical education and personal and social education programmes contribute significantly to pupils' well-being and their awareness of how to stay fit and healthy. The school is a harmonious learning community and is closely involved in local events. The arts week, for example, sees pupils' work exhibited in the local library and supermarkets. Charitable events and fundraising activities feature large in the life of the school.

Pupils make strides in their learning because teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan well to meet the needs of all pupils. They make use of regular assessments to inform planning, identify difficulties and provide additional support to help overcome them. Skilled and committed teaching assistants play a key role in supporting pupils with special educational needs and those who need extra stimulation and challenge. There are occasions, however, when teachers are too ready to provide information and miss opportunities for pupils to develop their own ideas and find out things for themselves. Teachers monitor pupils' written work closely but some marking does not give sufficient guidance on how to improve the content of that writing. Curriculum provision is good because of the balance between core subjects and the wider curriculum. The links between subjects are made clear, giving coherence to pupils' learning. Pupils also have extensive opportunities to use their basic skills flexibly in all subjects. Very good use is made of the natural environment and trips away to extend pupils' understanding of the world around them.

Leadership, management and governance are good. All who work in the school are committed to the welfare of pupils and ensuring they get the best possible deal. As a result, pupils receive good care and support. Leaders at all levels are experienced and highly effective, and have ensured that pupils have continued to progress well during a period of staff absence at senior level. They have been supported through these uncertainties by committed and hard working staff.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. There are some outstanding features, including the rapid progress children make in their personal, social and emotional development. Most children enter Nursery with skills which are above the expected levels for their age. Skills in writing, recognising letter sounds and in creativity are not so well developed.

From an outstanding start in Nursery, children make good progress throughout the Reception Year, and exceed the expectations for five-year-olds by the end of the year. The improvements to the environment are providing more opportunities for independent learning. The good range of planned activities excite and motivate children but sometimes adults over-direct learning so there are missed opportunities for children to use their imagination or follow their own ideas and interests.

The children are confident, adapting well to the routines of living, playing and sharing together as a result of excellent induction arrangements. The recent introduction of a structured phonics programme is accelerating the pace of learning letters and sounds. More able children can suggest adjectives to describe a pirate's character and are making good progress in writing sentences and remembering simple punctuation. Children in the Nursery enjoy singing about caterpillars and ladybirds in their study of insects and can distinguish between a storybook and a 'finding out' book. Experiences such as a visit to Whitehouse Farm, incubating chicken eggs or listening to visitors, extend their knowledge and understanding.

Good assessment arrangements identify any child in need of extra support. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively with individual children and small groups. The school is aware of the need to develop their role in supporting the teacher more effectively when large groups are taught together in Reception. Learning journey diaries are shared with parents to involve them in their children's learning. The care of children is outstanding. All requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met and risk assessments, both indoors and out, ensure children are safe. This Stage is well led by a knowledgeable, enthusiastic teacher who cares passionately about the children's education and welfare.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for pupils to test out their own ideas in open-ended learning tasks.
- Improve the consistency in teachers' marking so all pupils are clear about how they can make the content of their writing better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are well above average and pupils' achievement is good. Their attainment at the start in Year 1 is above average. The attainment of boys and girls at the end of Key Stage 1 has been consistently well above average in reading, writing and mathematics, including at the higher Level 3. Inspection evidence and the school's records indicate that the progress pupils in Year 2 are making has improved further compared with that of 2008, particularly in reading and writing. This places them on course to attain well above average standards this year. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress and attain at levels above those of similar pupils nationally. There is a small number of vulnerable pupils whose academic progress is outstanding because of the exemplary support they receive. Pupils' basic skills, including speaking and listening, are more highly developed than normally seen and they are used flexibly and well across all subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because, by the time they leave the school, they are confident and self-reliant youngsters who have the skills and personal

qualities to make the most of the next stage in their education. They have an exceptional understanding of how to keep healthy, evident in the lunch choices they make and their involvement in sporting activities. They say they feel safe and secure in school and that the few instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Their enjoyment of school is evident from the above average attendance rates and the well attended after-school clubs. Behaviour is excellent and the very small number of pupils who have difficulty adjusting to school routines are managed well and make the same good progress as others. Pupils learn to make decisions through the school council's involvement in school developments and they help to manage classroom resources, such as tidying away. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most pupils have a well developed social awareness, however, just occasionally, a few are too eager to speak and try to dominate discussions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Pupils are keen to learn and can concentrate for extended periods. Teachers' expectations are high but their approach is encouraging and supportive. As a result, pupils feel secure and cared for and so work well independently and collaboratively. Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) for learning; a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils can use a range of learning skills across curriculum areas, resulting in good progress in subjects like science and history. The recent Year 2 work on habitats, for example, involved ICT, library research, first-hand observation of wildlife, measurements and then the recording of what they had seen in a diary. The school has forged close links with parents to support their children in their learning and attendance at curriculum workshops is high, such as the Year 2 mathematics workshop on problem-solving activities and numerical strategies. Opportunities are provided for investigative work, as seen in a Year 1 science lesson where pupils explored the impact of water and sunlight on plant growth. There are fewer opportunities, however, for pupils to work at open-ended tasks where they have to test out and justify their own ideas. For example, printed information on historical artefacts was too readily available in a Year 2 lesson. An opportunity was missed to challenge the pupils to come up with their own ideas about how these items might have been used in the home.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. There is an appropriate balance between provision for pupils' basic skills and for broadening their understanding of the world around them. The school has done much to give coherence to pupils' learning by making the links between subjects clear and good examples were seen of cross-curricular working. Year 1's design and illustration of T-shirts embraced art, design and technology. The filming of the nesting blue tits and the hatching of their chicks covered environmental issues, computer technology and natural science. There are many visitors to the school who contribute to pupils' personal development, their health and safety and their awareness of the world at large. Links with local artists contribute to pupils' creative and cultural development. Extra-curricular activities and the many visits away do much for pupils' self-esteem and enjoyment of school. The Year 1 trip to Saltwell Park resulted in ideas for miniature gardens and sculptures. The school is looking to expand its international links as a way of developing the curriculum further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care and support are good. For the most vulnerable pupils, they are outstanding because their progress is carefully tracked and effective support given when needed. The involvement of professionals from outside agencies and regular pupil review meetings with class teachers are used to benefit children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils in class and so all are fully included in lessons and no-one feels left out. Gifted and talented pupils are also identified to ensure they are being sufficiently challenged and that their progress is maintained. The school takes its duties of care towards its pupils very seriously. Good procedures to follow up on absences result in above average attendance rates. Systems to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure meet requirements and arrangements for child protection, health and safety, risk assessments and fire safety are in place and regularly reviewed. Guidance is satisfactory. Pupils' work is regularly marked, with particular attention paid to handwriting and punctuation. However, the use of target setting and comments to identify ways that pupils can improve the content of their writing are not being used consistently across the school. This has already been identified by the school within its current school improvement plan.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. There has been recent significant staff absence at senior level and yet the quality of pupils' education has not been affected and their progress has remained good. Standards have risen compared with 2008. This is because of the hard work of staff and governors and the increased responsibilities of middle leaders who have discharged them exceptionally well. They monitor pupils' progress closely and have an accurate view of how well the school is doing and how to improve. Good use is made of challenging targets to raise standards. Professional development opportunities are used to hone teaching skills and share good practice. All are committed to equality of opportunity, apparent in the excellent support and care given to the most vulnerable pupils and the outstanding progress they make. Governors know the school well and are actively involved in its day-to-day life. They ask the right questions and play their part in forward planning. The school's contribution to its own and the community's sense of identity and unity is good. Not only is the school a harmonious working place where differences are respected, it is fully involved in local activities beyond its doors. There are close links with other schools to broaden curriculum provision and to aid transition when pupils move on. The higher standards seen in ICT, the improvements to the learning environment and the improved academic progress this year show that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

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 are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	2
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?	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

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 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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

9 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Fulwell Infant School, Sunderland, SR6 8ED

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we inspected your school. We enjoyed the two days we spent with you and were impressed by your excellent behaviour and how hard you were working. The adults told us how much they enjoy working with you and how proud they are of all the things you do well.

You attend a good school where you get the care and support you need. The standard of your work is better than in many other schools because you pay attention in lessons and always try your best. You are helped by caring teachers and assistants and the work you are given to do is interesting and fun. You do lots of exciting things in subjects like history and science and you learn about the local environment and wildlife. We wish we had been in your school when the blue tit chicks were hatching and watched their parents care for them.

We spent time looking at your art work and the photographs of the things you do outside lessons. You told us how much you enjoy all the activities, the trips away and listening to visitors. We saw you playing well together in the playground and the older pupils helping to look after the younger children. Please would the older ones read this letter to the little ones and explain everything we found to be good about your school.

There are two things we think would make your school even better. We have asked that you are given more tasks to do where you have to find out things for yourselves and come up with your own ideas. We have also asked that teachers write down in your books what you have to do to make your writing more interesting.

Enjoy the summer holidays and play safely with your friends. We hope you all have a great time.

Yours faithfully

Brian Dower

Lead inspector