

Harbottle Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122292
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340115
Inspection dates	17–18 March 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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Ward
Headteacher	Rev Sue Joyner
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. In addition to short visits to lessons, the inspector joined an assembly and made extended visits to seven lessons led by five teachers or specialist support staff. Meetings were held with governors, staff and groups of pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils' welfare, school policies and documentation, pupils' work, assessment data, monitoring records and strategic planning were checked. Fourteen questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as eight from pupils were considered.

- the attainment and progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in recent years
- the progress and achievement of individual pupils in Year 4 in 2008-9 and of individual pupils currently in Years 1 to 4
- the way in which the school promotes all aspects of community cohesion beyond the immediate locality
- how successfully the school develops pupils' writing.

Information about the school

This very small school serves an extensive rural locality in Upper Coquetdale. The school works in federation with the nearby Netherton Northside First School with the headteacher leading both schools. All pupils are of White British heritage; none is eligible for free school meals. A below average proportion of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities: none has a statement of special educational needs. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in a mixed-age class of Nursery, Reception and Year 1 children. The school holds the Healthy Schools award and the Activemark.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. All staff, under the exceptionally effective leadership of the headteacher, very successfully promote an atmosphere of calm and harmony, which truly reflects its mission to foster Christian values and caring relationships.

Marked improvements, to provide a rich and extensive curriculum, coupled with care guidance and support of exceptional quality, made since the last inspection have sustained good progress and raised standards. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit greatly from outstanding provision. Pupils achieve well. In no small measure, these improvements stem from the outstanding drive and ambition of the headteacher, staff and governors to improve learning and draw upon exceptionally fruitful partnerships with parents and carers and others. They focus sharply on raising standards, widening pupils' experience and fostering community cohesion. Diligently managed arrangements to safeguard pupils lead them to feel protected and conduct themselves safely and, in turn, parents and carers to be entirely confident about their welfare. Collectively, staff and governors monitor and review the school's work, very well, which leads to an accurate and well-informed evaluation. Taking all this into account, the school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

A very small number of children begin school each year. Their skills and knowledge varies widely, from below expectations to broadly as expected for their age. Very effective teaching, evident throughout, ensures that pupils make good progress. Some make outstanding progress as they move through the school. Pupils with identified learning difficulties, including special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. As a result of a dip in standards in 2008, close attention to improve writing, and new initiatives to strengthen mathematics, are paying dividends. Nonetheless the full impact of work to improve writing is yet to be realised in other subjects as well as in English. Teachers' marking praises pupils' accomplishments, but does not consistently give them clear and precise pointers to improve. By the end of Year 4, standards are above national age-related expectations.

Excellent behaviour is the norm. Pupils take part with notable enthusiasm in activities to promote healthy lifestyles. They thoroughly enjoy contributing in many ways to their community and have a very strong understanding of life and cultures both in Britain and in other countries. They are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Together, their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consolidate the impact of initiatives to improve standards, in writing particularly,

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by:

- ensuring that pupils are given clear and precise pointers to improve the quality of their work
- encouraging extended written work of high technical quality more widely throughout the curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy taking part in lessons. They are highly motivated and work responsibly on their own, collaboratively in small groups and happily take part in whole-class discussion. They enthusiastically want to contribute and confidently offer good, cogently expressed answers in reply to questions. Most take care to present their written work neatly. Amongst some older pupils, however, handwriting technique and technical skills, such as spelling and variety in vocabulary needed for excellent writing throughout the curriculum, are less well developed for their age.

Last year pupils made good progress in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 4 in 2009, standards were above age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. This pattern of good and, for some, exceptionally good progress to reach above expected standards continues for pupils presently in school. Overall, pupils learn and achieve well.

Excellent behaviour prevails throughout in classrooms and out-of-doors. The school is harmonious and all pupils, whatever their background, relate exceptionally well to each other. They say they feel safe and that bullying is not an issue of concern. Pupils have an excellent awareness of how to maintain healthy lifestyles. They speak knowledgeably about eating, put their all into physical activities and are very aware of the importance of emotional health. Pupils participate fully in activities, which enhance their school community and the particular culture of the locality. They willingly help others elsewhere through charitable work. Well-developed basic skills, which include an excellent facility with information and communication technology (ICT), very competent team working skills and enthusiasm for learning, are all factors which prepare them well for the next stage in their education. High attendance and no persistent absenteeism stem from the school's excellent relationship with parents and carers.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good throughout the school with some very strong aspects. Teachers use information about pupils' abilities exceptionally well. They have clear expectations of pupils' learning and cleverly plan activities and arrange working groups in mixed-age classes. Of especial note is the way in which older pupils willingly assist their younger classmates. Teachers and assistants work very well together, which in turn motivates pupils and sustains their involvement and enjoyment. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from well-planned activities and expert assistance, which help them make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Teachers set pupils clear objectives and let them know when they are met, but are not consistent in helping them bring about improvement. When marking pupils' work, their pointers for improvement often lack sufficient precision to make pupils' learning fully effective.

The firmly established thematic curriculum very successfully makes pertinent links between subjects to include literacy, numeracy and ICT. Carefully planned and managed, it ensures that pupils build on earlier work without repetition as they move from year-to-year in the same class. Many awards reflect the richness of opportunities the school affords pupils. Extensive partnerships with, for example, the Church, the National Park Service, heritage centres and neighbouring schools substantially extend pupils' experience and horizons. Pupils gain a deep insight into community life. They were enthralled and fully engaged listening to poetry and in singing indigenous folksongs with a local shepherd renowned for his skill in promoting this aspect of their local heritage. A carefully planned programme successfully embraces all aspects of

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community cohesion by providing many opportunities for widening pupils' awareness of life in Britain, in Europe and further afield. A thoroughly well-structured approach to personal, social and emotional aspects of learning also plays a key part in fostering outstanding aspects of pupils' attitudes to health and their spiritual moral, social and cultural development.

Parents and carers are fully involved in school activities and value highly the school's communication and partnership with them. The school has successfully encouraged frequent attendance and eliminated persistent absenteeism. Well-trained teaching assistants and experienced volunteer helpers make a key contribution to helping pupils learn and develop confidence. The school very successfully ensures that it offers a safe and caring environment where pupils are happy, confident and at ease with one another. Excellent arrangements effectively foster children's transition from home and are exemplary in the way they prepare pupils for moving onto the next phase in their education.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Under the dedicated leadership of the headteacher, the staff team drives improvement with commendable determination. Teaching has improved and some aspects are now outstanding. With a well-developed team spirit and a common vision and approach, all staff totally embrace the education and care of all pupils and ensure equality of opportunity leading to excellent outcomes for pupils. Governors are very well informed and make excellent use of their expertise both to support the school and hold it to account. They benefit from analytical reports and gain for themselves a first-hand perspective of the school's work. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and a strong desire to assist with further improvement. Their development planning focuses sharply upon fostering community cohesion and raising standards further, particularly in writing and mathematics. Well-thought out activities are closely aligned to meeting these goals. The school promotes community cohesion to excellent effect.

The school carefully ensures that all groups of pupils participate fully without discrimination. Governors and the school ensure that procedures for child protection, recruitment, risk assessment and attention to health and safety combine to meet all requirements for safeguarding pupils' welfare. Given the outstanding outcomes for pupils the school provides excellent value for money.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Although only a small number enter the Nursery each year, they begin with starting points broadly as expected, but for some with competencies that are lower in their use of language and communication. Compared to earlier years, by the end of Reception, standards in 2009 improved in almost all aspects of learning and are well above average, particularly in personal and social development and mathematical development. Standards in communication and language development also improved but are closer to the average. All children settle to routines quickly, and clearly enjoy working both independently and cooperatively. Outstanding care and working relationships prevail throughout. Staff make excellent use of diligent assessments to foster children's learning in a very well organised way. They ensure children learn well from effective use of both the indoor and outdoor facilities and a rich mix of activities which children initiate or adults plan and support. Work that helps children develop knowledge of mathematics is particularly successful, such as in a group where children were fully involved in active learning about measuring dimensions, weight and capacity. Adults pay close regard to the care and welfare of children. Diligent planning and effective communication consolidate a strong productive partnership with parents and carers. Useful information offers parents and carers guidance on how to help their children learn at home. Most children make outstanding progress as a result of expert management in this very well led stage of their education.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

All parents and carers who returned questionnaires were entirely supportive. They were particularly pleased with the way the school is managed so that their children are safe, develop a healthy lifestyle and enjoy their overall experience of school. The very few written comments were very positive. The inspection entirely upholds parents' and carers' views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harbottle Church of England Voluntary Aided 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 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 27 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	57	6	43	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	43	8	57	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	64	5	36	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	71	3	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	50	7	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	79	3	21	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)	7	50	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	8	57	5	36	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	64	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	57	6	43	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	10	71	3	21	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	79	3	21	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 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>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.



Dear Pupils

I really enjoyed my visit to inspect your school. Thank you for helping me when I came to see you at work in your lessons and in assemblies. You were very polite and I did enjoy talking with some of you. I know the headteacher and all the staff are very proud of you. I was delighted to see how much you like to take part enthusiastically in activities. I really liked listening to you when you sang along with the Singing Shepherd. Wasn't he great? You are exceptionally well behaved and considerate towards others in lessons. I was very impressed with the way you help make your school an enjoyable place to be, and the way you contribute to your local community.

Yours is an outstanding school. All the adults in the school look after you really well and keep you safe. You make good progress in many aspects of your work because your school gives you a very wide range of activities that are helped by many visitors and visits. Your standards in Year 4 are above those expected for pupils of your age. Those of you needing extra help learn very well. From my visits to lessons and looking at your books I saw that some of your writing is really good, but some of you should take more care with your spelling and improve your joined-up writing. I have asked your teachers to help you to improve your skills whenever you have to do some written work. I liked the way your teachers let you know what they expect you to learn and how well you are doing. When they mark your work, I have asked them to let you know more clearly ways in which you can do better.

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

Yours sincerely,

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