

Guide Post Ringway First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122247
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	380433
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Patterson
Headteacher	Hazel Scott
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed five teachers in nine lessons. They held meetings with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and pupils. They talked informally with parents and carers who attended a coffee morning and took into account the views of 39 parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation provided by the school, including data relating to pupils' progress and attainment, safeguarding policies and procedures, the school improvement plan and minutes of meetings of the governing body and monitoring and evaluation activities. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work from the previous year, and awards and certificates won by pupils for their contribution to enterprise and the community.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which changes to the curriculum have improved pupils' learning and personal development.
- Whether improvements to systems for care, guidance and support ensure all pupils have access to all the school has to offer and achieve equally well.
- How well leaders and managers, including the governing body, contribute to improving the school.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average but numbers have increased markedly since the establishment of a private Nursery on site. Nearly all pupils are from White British heritage and there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. So too is the proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school holds numerous awards including Healthy School status, Creative Partnerships and the Warwick Award for Enterprise in Education.

The school experienced a higher than usual amount of staffing turbulence since the last inspection, due to unavoidable absence. This meant that pupils in some classes had more than one teacher in the course of the year. This term a number of teachers have changed the age group they teach. This is the case in the Early Years Foundation Stage where the leader is new to the age group. New teaching assistants have also been appointed this term and the assistant headteacher has returned from maternity leave. Staffing is now stable.

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

1

Main findings

Ringway First School is a good school. It has some outstanding features. Inspirational leadership from the headteacher has brought out the best in the staff and taken the school forward at a rapid rate since it was last inspected, despite staffing turbulence. The overall outcomes for pupils are outstanding because of the exceptional quality of care, guidance and support and the good teaching they receive. Pupils feel extremely safe and valued, which together with their outstanding behaviour creates a very positive, warm environment for learning. Pupils have an excellent sense of citizenship and make an outstanding contribution to their own happy community, and to others further afield.

Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well from a wide range of starting points. At the end of Year 2, attainment is average and by Year 4 it is above the level expected for this age, particularly in reading and writing. Although attainment in mathematics is slightly above expectations by Year 4, pupils lack some confidence in using their mathematical skills to solve problems.

Pupils learn well because teaching is good. Teachers plan interesting activities which motivate young learners, and they give good quality advice to pupils on how to improve their work. They have good subject knowledge, although this is not as consistently strong in mathematics as it is in English. A good curriculum is enhanced with several outstanding aspects to motivate learners. Opportunities provided by the outstanding promotion of community cohesion and the enterprise curriculum take pupils beyond the school experience and give them insights into the wider world. These experiences contribute well to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Creative approaches to other aspects of learning have fired pupils' enthusiasm for writing, contributing well to improvements in attainment by the end of Year 4. The curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the Reception class, is satisfactory but improving quickly as the recently appointed leader assesses the training and resources the school recognises are needed to extend provision for children's independent learning. All adults nurture and care for pupils extremely well so that they feel very safe in school and are able to enjoy all the school has to offer. Excellent links with external services and parents and carers ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances may make them potentially vulnerable are very well supported to achieve as well as other pupils.

The headteacher's drive for excellence is apparent in all of the school's work. She is fully supported in this by staff and the governing body. Since the previous inspection, the roles of all staff and the governing body have been successfully developed so that they are fully involved in improving the school. Significant improvements to the outcomes for pupils and the quality of care, guidance and support have taken them from good to outstanding since the previous inspection, while improvements to the outdoor learning environment and the wider curriculum have greatly enhanced pupils' enjoyment of learning and sense of success. In the light of these improvements, the school demonstrates an excellent capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - providing training for staff in how to teach calculation strategies and methods so that they are consistently well taught across the school
 - ensuring that pupils are given enough time to consolidate their learning and plenty of opportunity to apply their mathematical skills to real life situations.

- Further accelerate improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing training for recently appointed staff, especially in assessing children's needs and planning to meet them
 - increasing resources to support children's independent learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils are extremely happy at school because they enjoy learning and are given many opportunities to learn from each other. They make good progress in lessons because they have excellent attitudes to work and are always keen to get started on the interesting tasks that teachers provide. Pupils know that there is always help available if they have a problem and they have complete confidence in teachers to make sure they understand their work. They delight in showing teachers how well they can do. This was evident in a Year 4 shared writing lesson where pupils joined in with excellent suggestions to improve the story. Younger pupils relish opportunities for learning outdoors and teachers provide plenty of activities for them in the excellent outdoor environment. Pupils' excellent behaviour and their strong contribution to the life of the school create a very secure and warm community in which they flourish. The school council has developed playground facilities so that they provide excellent opportunities for every age group to learn through play and exploration, while playground Buddies ensure that pupils always have someone to turn to for a playmate or for help. By the time they leave in Year 4, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and gives them a maturity and tolerance beyond their years.

Pupils make good progress during their time in school, from broadly average starting points when they enter in the Reception class. Attainment when pupils leave school

is above that expected for their age. The school has succeeded in closing the gap in attainment between boys and girls since the previous inspection. This has been achieved through innovative developments to the curriculum which have increased boys' enthusiasm for writing. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their class mates, because they are well supported by staff and their fellow pupils.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have a good understanding of how pupils learn best and provide a good variety of activities to capture their interest and motivate them. They know that pupils enjoy learning from each other, so they provide plenty of opportunity for shared activities. Teachers make good use of computer technology to reinforce pupils' learning and to keep the pace of lessons brisk. While teachers' subject knowledge is good overall, there are inconsistencies in their skills and confidence to teach some aspects of mathematics. The school has recognised this and consequently improvements in mathematics provision are a priority this year. Teachers' marking and feedback to pupils helps them improve their work. Effective, new assessment procedures are helping teachers to gain confidence in their assessments of what pupils in their new classes can do and to use these assessments to plan for pupils' different needs. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, although there are occasions when they limit pupils' progress and independence by over-supporting them with tasks.

The curriculum is matched well to the needs of all pupils. Cross-curricular links have been developed so that pupils have opportunities to consolidate and extend their basic skills in other subjects. This has not yet been achieved fully in mathematics, though in English it is having a notable impact on improving attainment in writing. The excellent development of an enterprise curriculum, which gives pupils wide-ranging opportunities for creative thinking, problem solving and team-building, has had an enormous impact on pupils' enthusiasm for learning and the development of

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

their confidence. They are rightly proud of the awards they have won for their efforts in this field. Creative partnerships have extended pupils’ knowledge of their own and wider communities, for example, in France and in Kenya. They have made an excellent contribution to pupils’ understanding of similarities and differences between communities. A good range of well supported after school clubs further extend pupils’ talents and develop new skills.

Outstanding care, guidance and support provide the foundation for every pupil’s success in this happy, vibrant school. Pupils say, and their parents and carers agree, that the school keeps them safe and takes very good care of them. Staff are determined to help pupils succeed and ensure their well-being. Teachers are quick to identify pupils who need additional support and the school makes good links with external services to provide expert help. The headteacher is relentless in her pursuit of support for pupils whose circumstances may make them potentially vulnerable and makes excellent links with parents and carers to ensure that the school and home work together in the best interests of the child.

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?

The headteacher has given an excellent lead to improving the school since the previous inspection. Overall outcomes for pupils are now outstanding. Improvement has been sustained and significant because the headteacher’s ambition and drive to get the best for and from each pupil has been fully embraced by all staff and the governing body. The roles of staff have developed well and morale is high. All play an increasing part in monitoring and very accurately evaluating the school’s work and in taking action to further improve pupils' outcomes and provision. As a result the quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly in response to monitoring and in particular to changes to the curriculum. Pupils are now very confident about learning independently and this is accelerating their progress. Commitment to the headteacher’s vision for the school is accelerating improvement. For example, although the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is currently satisfactory, there is clear evidence of rapid improvement in children’s outcomes, provision and leadership and management.

The governing body gives good support and challenge to the school because it has good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development through regular and effective monitoring. Members ensure that safeguarding procedures are good and ensure the safety and well-being of staff and pupils. The governing body makes good links with the community to ensure the school is alert to its needs, and it is careful to take account of parents’ and carers’ views when making decisions about the strategic development of the school. Equal opportunity is promoted well so that

all pupils have equal access to what the school has to offer. The governing body ensures that policy and the school's practice mean discrimination in any form is not tolerated.

Community cohesion is outstanding. Thorough planning and evaluation of need reflects the school's priority in valuing diversity and extending pupils' personal horizons. This is achieved through numerous links locally, nationally and internationally which enable pupils to develop not only a good understanding of other communities but also their role in supporting them. The school forms excellent links with parents and carers to help them support their children's learning. Outstanding links with partner schools and external providers further strengthen the enrichment and support for pupils' learning.

These are the grades for the 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	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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Excellent links with the on-site private Nursery, and with parents and carers, prepare children well for their entry to the Reception class. They settle well and are eager to learn. Good routines have been established which help children feel secure and early morning 'shared time' with parents and carers boosts their confidence and sense of well-being. When they start, children's skills are broadly typical for their age, but increasing numbers join with weaknesses in communication and language, especially speaking skills. Children benefit from well planned direct teaching, so they sometimes make good progress in their communication, language and literacy development. Provision to learn independently, by selecting activities and directing their own investigations, is hampered by some shortages in resources. When the opportunities to work independently occur, as when a group built a cave for the bear they were hunting, children's learning accelerates noticeably. The recently appointed Early Years Foundation Stage leader is eager to develop this provision both indoors and out and has identified the need to increase resources. The new team is working closely to assess children's skills and interests although some staff lack the necessary skills to do this confidently. Children make steady progress in the Reception class with evidence of good recent improvements, and reach the expected level for their age by the time they join Year 1.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires is higher than usual. These showed that they are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and welcome the close links it forms with them. They are unanimous in feeling their children are safe at school and are happy with their child’s experience of school. The vast majority think their children are taught and prepared well for the next stage of learning. One comment captured the views of many, ‘This is a lovely school with friendly approachable staff. Our child is making good progress.’ Some parents and carers raised concerns about the school’s communication with them, while others were concerned about the school’s provision for reading. Inspectors investigated all of these concerns. The report reflects all of the views that pinpoint the school’s strengths identified by parents and carers. The school has numerous effective ways of communicating with parents and carers. A new reading scheme has been introduced this term as a result of the school’s recent monitoring of reading provision. The school is also reviewing its programme of letters and sounds to ensure that reading skills are taught to all age groups throughout the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Guide Post Ringway 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 39 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 83 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	64	13	33	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	69	12	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	15	38	19	49	5	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	46	16	41	5	13	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	49	19	49	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	46	19	49	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	46	21	54	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	46	17	44	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	54	14	36	4	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	46	16	41	3	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	33	18	46	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	51	16	41	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	54	18	46	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 all 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



30 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Guide Post Ringway First School, Choppington NE62 5YP

Thank you for the lovely welcome you gave to us when we inspected your school recently. Your excellent behaviour and caring attitudes impressed us very much. Our findings confirm the views of those of you who told us how good your school is. We also found some things about your school that are outstanding, many of them about you. We think you make your school a lovely place to be by making suggestions and getting things done to improve it. You also help a lot of people in your village and in places further away. You have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and are tolerant and kind to each other. You work hard in lessons and always do your best. No wonder your teachers, parents and carers are so proud of you!

Another outstanding thing we found out about your school is how well all the adults look after you, make sure you are safe and help you to succeed in your lessons. We noticed that your headteacher is always looking out for things that will excite and interest you and give you lovely experiences in your learning. We think your enterprise activities give you some extra-special skills such as working as a team, thinking up good solutions to problems and getting the job done. You have made good improvements in your writing recently, because teachers have worked together to make this more exciting. We have asked the headteacher to make improvements to how well you learn in mathematics and make sure you have a chance to solve problems too. We think the older children have plenty of equipment in their classroom to help them learn well, but that children in the Reception class would learn more quickly if they had more resources. We have asked your headteacher to buy a wider range of resources to enrich the curriculum in Reception, and extend the children's independent and self-chosen activities. The good news is that your headteacher, teachers and members of the governing body already had plans to do both of the things we have asked them to do. That is why your school is so good and why it is improving all the time.

You can all help it to get even better by being as well behaved, hard working and fun-loving as you now are. Best wishes for the rest of the year.

Yours sincerely

Moira Fitzpatrick
Lead inspector

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