

Wessington Primary

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134532
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	328924
Inspection dates	1-2 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Graham HMI

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	0-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	210
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	17
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Dianne Snowdon
Headteacher	Mrs Pat Dutton
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lanercost Washington NE38 7PY
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Age group	0-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Wessington Primary School is an average sized primary schools but the number of pupils on roll is declining. The area suffers from social and economic disadvantage and an above average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average but the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is about the same as in other schools. There are fewer children from minority ethnic backgrounds than in most schools. The school opened in 2004 following the amalgamation of two primary schools. There is a children's centre on site and the school provides day care for 44 children under the age of three. The school also provides before and after school care and holiday care. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2008 and there have been a number of staffing changes. The school has achieved a number of awards including the Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Wessington Primary is a satisfactory school. The headteacher and governors have successfully steered the school through an amalgamation, the setting up of a children's centre on the school site, day care provision based in the school and the introduction of extended school provision. It is to their credit that this has been achieved by a very small leadership team during a turbulent period in the school's history. These additional resources do much to enhance the school and to improve the provision made for pupils. However, the headteacher and governors are aware that during this period they did not keep a close enough eye on teaching and learning and as a result, standards at the end of both key stages declined. In 2006 standards dipped significantly, particularly in Key Stage 1, and although there was some improvement in 2007 the headteacher and governors recognised that a very high proportion of pupils were underachieving. With the help of the local authority the school has halted the decline and has ensured that pupil attainment is improving in all year groups.

End of Key Stage 1 assessments in summer 2008 show that more children attained higher levels in all core subjects than did so in previous years. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 2b+ in reading and mathematics increased significantly and a small proportion of pupils attained Level 3. This was an improvement on the previous year. School data and evidence seen during the inspection indicate that similar improvements were made in Key Stage 2. Local authority analysis also indicates that pupils are now making better progress than was previously the case. Attainment in mathematics, previously the weakest of the core subjects in both key stages, has improved, but writing remains a weakness throughout the school.

The school tracks the progress made by individual pupils and has introduced a system of half termly assessments. Any underachievement is identified promptly and extra support is provided. However, not all teachers are equally skilled at carrying out assessments and as a result some assessments of pupil progress are a little too generous and the targets set for pupils' attainment are not always accurate. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English achieve as well as other groups because they receive very good support and the school checks their progress carefully, noting the small steps in their attainment.

All teaching observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory and nearly half was good. Staff have benefited from well targeted professional development. Most lessons are well organised and proceed at a brisk pace. Pupils are told what they will learn and how they will know when learning has been successful. Teachers use questioning well to help pupils understand new ideas and concepts or to correct misunderstandings. All pupils make progress during each lesson but not all pupils make as much progress as they could because teachers do not always ensure that the work pupils are given is accurately matched to their ability. Teaching assistants and higher level teaching assistants are very effective and provide very good support in lessons or when working with small groups.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It has recently been reviewed and teachers are beginning to identify the wider skills which could be developed in each topic. A very good range of sporting and other activities are available during school time or in after-school clubs and these are valued and enjoyed by pupils.

Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy school and learn to live together as part of a community. Behaviour is usually good and pupils are very positive about incentives which encourage them to be polite and helpful. Attendance is good and most pupils appear to enjoy

school. Those parents who returned the inspection questionnaires were overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Parents who spoke to inspectors reported the same level of satisfaction.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. School leaders ensure that pupils are very well cared for and supported and that all pupils are fully included in the life of the school but they have not always ensured that pupils achieve well. As a result the school provides only satisfactory value for money. Capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is good. When children start Nursery they can do less than others of their age, particularly in some aspects of communication, language and literacy and in their mathematical development. As yet it is too soon for the children's centre and day care provision to have made a significant impact on these skills on entry to the EYFS. Throughout the EYFS children make good progress and by the end of the Reception year are attaining in line with national Foundation Stage Profile outcomes in most areas. They make most progress in the areas of physical and creative development and least progress in writing and communication skills. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of children.

Children are kept safe and secure. Welfare requirements are given due importance and are well met. Children are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles in age-appropriate ways. Routines in the day care follow the needs of the children and are sensitively handled. All children are encouraged to be as independent as possible. Induction procedures are good throughout, supporting children well and helping to smooth the transition from one setting to another. For example, a display of drawings from Nursery displayed in Reception reminds children of the work they did last term. Relationships are a strength. Practitioners show real enjoyment at being with children and are very skilled, particularly in Nursery and daycare, in knowing when to intervene to move learning forward.

There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. A strong emphasis is placed on children's well-being and on helping them develop the skills needed for learning. Detailed observations help staff to identify children's interests and plan the next steps in their learning. Elsewhere a mixture of short observations and learning stories are used to develop a rich curriculum with good opportunities to play and explore. Opportunities for reading and mark-making are evident throughout the areas; some children, for example, enjoyed filling in accident forms as part of their role-play. The outdoor area allows children to explore all areas of learning but the school is aware that it needs further development. Some of the play activities lack challenge for older and more able children.

Leadership of the EYFS is good. School leaders have focused on developing the environment and building the new team. This has been successfully achieved. There is a clear plan for future developments that feeds into the school development plan. The day care manager has produced an accurate and informative self-evaluation form.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that recent improvements are sustained.
- Improve achievement by ensuring that all children are given work more accurately matched to their ability.
- Raise standards in writing.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are slightly lower than average. When children start school many can do less than would typically be expected for their age. They make good progress during the EYFS but their language and communication skills remain less well developed than their skills in other areas. Progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 is more variable. Following the amalgamation in 2005 standards began to decline with a significant decline in 2006. There was some improvement in 2007 but fewer pupils reached the higher levels in tests and assessments than did so nationally and standards remained below national averages. Data show that from 2005 to 2007 pupils' achievement was inadequate. With support from the local authority the decline in standards has been halted and improvements have been made. The outcomes of assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2008 indicate that more pupils attained higher levels in all core subjects than in previous years. School data and evidence from the inspection confirm that similar improvements were made in Key Stage 2, particularly in reading. However, a legacy of underachievement remains in all core subjects, particularly in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school. They are friendly and helpful and have good relationships with teachers, other adults and with each other. Behaviour is good. Pupils move around the school safely and are courteous and considerate. They take care of the school and its resources very well. Older pupils 'apply' for posts of responsibility within the school, for example as play leaders or as managers of the fruit trolley. They enjoy contributing to the life of the school in this way. The school council is effective and pupils say that their contributions are valued and taken into account when decisions are made. Pupils' social development is good. They are confident and support each other well. They encourage each other during lessons and listen carefully when their classmates speak. In assembly they are quick to applaud the achievements of others and recognise success. Their cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory. All pupils are fully included in the life of the school and pupils of all ages are learning how to live in a diverse society. Pupils enjoy learning Makaton (a system for improving communication with those who are hearing-impaired) and were enthusiastic when signing their 'good mornings' in assembly. Pupils are encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle and have good opportunities to participate in a range of sports and undertake 'challenge activities' at break and lunchtimes. Through their satisfactory academic achievements and their good personal development, pupils are suitably prepared for moving on to other schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is at least satisfactory and often good. Effective lesson planning ensures that lessons are well organised and proceed at a brisk pace. In most lessons teachers skilfully balance short, well targeted explanations with interesting and varied pupil tasks. Pupils work in a variety of

groupings and the very effective use made of paired work helps to develop their speaking and listening skills and gives them the confidence to offer ideas and explanations. In most lessons work is matched to the age of pupils and to national expectations of the levels they might be expected to achieve. This is having the desired effect of raising teachers' expectations of what their pupils might attain. However, although all pupils make some progress because they are skilfully supported by teachers and teaching assistants not every pupil progresses as well as they could because the objectives of some lessons are not well enough matched to individual needs. Pupils know their targets and in some classes they are beginning to evaluate the progress they make towards these. Marking is usually good. In most classes pupils receive very good guidance which helps them improve their work. This is especially so in writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils have particularly good opportunities to develop creative, musical and sporting skills. The curriculum for promoting pupils' writing has been strengthened. Plans have recently been reviewed to ensure that pupils have enough time to learn how to write in a variety of forms and to practise new skills. A clear plan tells teachers which type of writing should be the focus in each half term. The school has purchased commercial schemes of work which support teachers and promote pupils' enjoyment of writing. The curriculum in Year 1 is adapted satisfactorily to meet the needs of children who are not ready for more formal teaching and pupils in other classes benefit from intervention programmes which are designed to boost attainment. French is taught in all classes and pupils can learn to play musical instruments.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care and support provided for pupils are very good. This is a school in which parents and pupils are made welcome. Vulnerable pupils and those needing additional support are cared for tactfully and to very good effect. All the latest safeguarding procedures have been implemented and all staff have received appropriate training. Health and safety procedures are exemplary and staff are offered a good range of unusual and very useful training, for example in being a fire marshal. Pupils are given good personal and moral guidance but until recently academic guidance has not been good enough to help pupils reach challenging targets and make good progress.

Extended services are good. The after-school and a breakfast clubs serve pupils from Wessington and from other local schools. The atmosphere in both clubs is relaxed, welcoming and very caring. Pupils behave well and join in activities. Pupils from different schools socialise well together and younger children have the security of knowing they are with their siblings or other children from their school. Activities in the breakfast club include more active choices allowing pupils to be energetic before settling to lessons. Systems for recording attendance and keeping children safe and secure are good. Healthy food is served but choices are limited.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Day-to-day management is good. The school building is attractive and well maintained. The school manages a number of budgets very effectively. This has been recognised by the local authority, which is piloting the use of local authority credit cards in the school. These cards help the school achieve best value in all their dealings and make more efficient use of time. The school is aware that it did not act promptly enough on the main areas for improvement identified during the last inspection. Many of the improvements made in recent months are the result of well targeted action by the local authority working in partnership with school staff. Changes to the leadership team, including the development and training of some key managers and administrators, have significantly strengthened its capacity to bring about further improvement. Local authority support has also helped the school develop the capacity of senior and middle leaders. The school has introduced systems and procedures which help the leadership team monitor the work of the school more effectively. However, although a great deal of information is collected, monitoring activities are not sufficiently well focused on the most important areas for development. School self-evaluation is accurate and the headteacher's judgements about the effectiveness of teaching and learning are robust. Plans made to improve the school identify the actions which will be taken and the people responsible for ensuring that actions are completed. However, it is not always clear how the impact of the actions taken will be evaluated or what the impact has been. The governing body is astute and well informed. Members visit the school regularly and evaluate activities and documents very perceptively. A sub-committee of very experienced and committed governors manage the improvement process very effectively. They have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school coupled with a determination to ensure that the current trend of improvement is sustained.

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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?	3
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	3

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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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**Annex A**

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

3 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wessington Primary School, Sunderland. NE38 7PY

Thank you for being so helpful when I visited the school with Mrs Waugh, Mr Pattinson and Miss Gill. We really enjoyed meeting you all and hearing your views about the school.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. It does some things very well; for example, caring for you and helping you if you have a problem. It also provides good care and education for the children in Nursery and Reception and for the very youngest children. However, in recent years pupils at your school have not made as much progress as they should have done. Mrs Dutton and the staff know this and they are working very hard to put things right. During the inspection we could see that their efforts have been successful and that you are making better progress but we think you could do better still so we have asked the staff to make sure that you all do work which is exactly right for your ability. The tests and assessments you took at the end of the summer term show that you are good at reading and that you are getting better at mathematics but that you need to improve in writing. We have asked the school to make sure that you do. We have also asked the staff to continue to think about how to make things better so that the school improves even more.

You are already helping the school to improve by being so well behaved and helpful. We could see how much you enjoyed receiving your rewards and certificates in assembly. We were very pleased to see that you help each other and that you are so willing to clap when other people get rewards and certificates. We could see that you enjoy school and that you value all the extra activities which are available. We were very impressed with your ability to sign 'good morning' in assembly.

We think that your school is a very happy school where everyone is valued. We know that your parents feel the same way and that they are very pleased with all that the school provides. Enjoy the rest of the year and take very good care of Bill.

Yours sincerely

Christine Graham

Her Majesty's Inspector