

Amble Links First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122173
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	359182
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	David Shearsmith

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carol Moyle
Headteacher	Mr Paul Heeley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. As well as short visits to parts of lessons, five teachers were observed in extended visits to 12 lessons. An inspector observed morning assembly, examined a variety of examples of pupils' written work and held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils. The inspectors scrutinised the school's child protection and safeguarding documentation, information about the curriculum, notes of meetings, development plans, and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors received and analysed 46 questionnaires from parents and carers, 34 from pupils in Key Stage 2 and 15 from members of staff.

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

- How well assessment supports pupils' progress across the school.
- How well the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils.
- How well the school promotes national and international understanding with pupils.
- How well the governing body supports and challenges the school.
- How good pupils' progress is across the school.

Information about the school

The school is a smaller than average-sized primary school. An above average percentage of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average as is the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs. Almost all pupils are White British. The school has gained Healthy School status and the Activemark award. A new headteacher took up post in September 2010.

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

2

Main findings

Amble Links is a good school providing a happy and secure environment for its pupils. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school, with a commitment to ensuring pupils get access to good quality learning. He is well supported by a strong team of staff and a leadership team who have a high level of commitment to the school and its community. The leadership team has sustained the school through a number of changes in leadership and has ensured that the school has continued to make good progress.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress from low starting points. They get off to a good start as a result of the good care and support they receive. Occasionally, however, outdoor learning activities are not challenging enough. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 4 is broadly average and is continuing to rise. Throughout the school, progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. This is as a result of the good support provided by teaching assistants and the effectively planned teaching. Pupils do well, in this caring and close community. They feel very safe, know about keeping healthy and have very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are happy at school and attendance rates have improved and are now broadly average.

The quality of teaching in the main school is consistently good, consequently, pupils progress well and their achievement is good. Assessment strategies to support learning are used well, ensuring pupils make good progress. During the inspection there was a range of activities taking place which interested and engaged pupils. While teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) in some subjects,

they do not always use it effectively across all subjects in order to enhance pupils' work. The school has a good curriculum as staff provide interesting and stimulating activities for pupils. This adds to pupils' enjoyment and is one reason why they speak so positively about their school.

Senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well, with the governing body providing good support and challenge. The school improvement plan accurately identifies key objectives from an effective school self-evaluation. Attainment over the past three years has risen which demonstrates the school's good capacity for sustained improvement. Local community cohesion is good; however, pupils have insufficient experiences beyond their locality. The school gives good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring pupils take more responsibility for their own learning
 - ensuring pupils are challenged through more investigative approaches to learning
 - making more effective use of ICT in all subjects to enhance pupils' work.
- Provide the younger children with effective and challenging outdoor learning opportunities.
- Improve pupils' understanding of national and international cultures by forging links with other schools, countries and cultures.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Most children start school with skills that are much lower than those expected for their age. Attainment by the end of Year 2 has been broadly average in all subjects in the last three years. Attainment is rising in Key Stage 2 and pupils are meeting age-related expectations by the end of Year 4. A strong focus on improving pupils' literacy skills has improved pupils' progress and attainment in reading and especially in writing. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress because of the good

quality knowledge and experience of support staff and the quality of the focused teaching.

Pupils take part enthusiastically in lessons and assemblies. They are attentive and quickly become thoroughly engaged in activities. Pupils take pride in their work and write neatly. They happily contribute to discussions with partner-pupils and readily take an active part in assemblies. Pupils have a good grasp of what healthy living involves. They participate keenly in physical activities and sport. Pupils develop confidence and responsibility from a range of opportunities to enhance the school community. Pupils work well together and participate in curriculum activities that have very strong links to local business and service providers. These help pupils to develop good business and enterprise skills. Pupils make good progress in their development of basic skills, together with their good personal skills they are well prepared for future learning and life. There has been a strong focus on improving pupils' behaviour and this has had a positive impact; behaviour is now good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong, although their understanding of the diverse cultures represented within the United Kingdom and beyond is less secure.

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	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to plan interesting lessons. They make good use of assessment information about pupils' prior learning and activities match pupils' abilities well. In the most effective lessons, pupils maintain their interest and work hard. They contribute well through discussions with other pupils. Teachers use effective strategies during direct teaching to engage pupils and they make good progress. Independent activities are well structured but do not always allow pupils enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning through more open-ended investigations. Marking is good and gives pupils clear advice on how to improve.

The curriculum is relevant to pupils' interests and broadens pupils' experience well by meeting their needs well. Pupils have many opportunities for applying their basic literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. In literacy, pupils produced good quality writing on the topic of Rainforests, as well as extended writing where good links had been made with other subjects. Occasionally, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT to enhance their learning in all subjects.

The school gives a high priority to ensuring pupils are safe and cared for well. Pupils are all known extremely well by all staff. When necessary, they receive expert individual support that enables them to thrive. The school takes great care to help children make the transition from home into the Early Years Foundation Stage, into Year 1 and ultimately on to the middle school. A very strong partnership with parents and carers together with effective procedures, have helped to improve attendance.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher provides clear, purposeful leadership. There is a strong sense of community within and around the school. He is well supported by all staff who have a good knowledge of the school and its community and are a very strong team. The monitoring of teaching and learning is effective and has had a positive impact on improving the school. Members of the governing body ensure that statutory requirements are met fully. They have a good understanding of the school and have supported and challenged the school well during changes of leadership. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and, at the time of the inspection, safeguarding procedures were good and a strength of the school due to very good daily procedures to ensure pupils' safety. The school works very effectively with external agencies, and parents and carers, to support vulnerable pupils as necessary and to ensure that they have the same good opportunities as other pupils. Senior leaders have a positive approach towards promoting community cohesion, however, they are aware that it needs developing further to ensure that pupils are gaining a good understanding of life in a multicultural United Kingdom and cultures in other parts of the world.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery class with low skill levels, particularly in communication, language and literacy and mathematical skills. They make good progress in both

Nursery and Reception classes as a result of good teaching and well planned and purposeful activities which engage their interest. Effective planning, monitoring and assessment help children to learn well. Children have time to explore their ideas and are encouraged to share and to take responsibility. Outdoor activities do not always challenge children effectively. A good balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities ensures that individual learning needs are met and specific skills are developed. Assessment procedures are good and provide a thorough picture of children's progress and the next steps they need to take in their learning. Care and support for children and their families are good and ensure children's safety and well-being. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader gives a clear direction for development with a strong focus on enjoyment and achievement.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The vast majority feel the school is well led and children are very safe and secure. Almost all feel that their child enjoys school and they are very pleased with their child's progress. The inspection endorses these perceptions.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Amble Links 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 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 125 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	67	18	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	72	15	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	38	66	16	28	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	67	18	31	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	42	72	15	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	64	19	33	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	59	23	40	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)	29	50	27	47	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	62	20	34	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	55	21	36	4	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	55	22	38	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	45	78	12	21	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	74	14	24	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 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 2009/10 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:	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. <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.



24 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Amble Links First School, Morpeth, NE65 0SA

I am writing to thank you all for making us so welcome when we came to your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit because you gave us a warm welcome and shared with us the many things that you do well in the school. Amble Links is a good school.

Here are some of the things that the school does well:

- the new headteacher and staff lead and manage the school well
- you behave well, get along with each other and feel very safe in school
- you make good progress in your learning particularly those who sometimes struggle with their learning from time to time
- you have a good understanding of how to live healthily and told us how you eat healthy options and participate in sporting and other activities
- you told us that you find lessons interesting and really enjoy activities in and out of school.

Even good schools can get better. I have asked your headteacher, staff and the governing body to look at ways of helping you to achieve even more. I have asked them to:

- ensure teachers help you to learn more
- give the youngest children more chances to play and learn outdoors

- help you understand how people live in the United Kingdom and beyond.

Yours sincerely

Mr David Shearsmith

Lead inspector

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