

East Boldon Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108688
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	309768
Inspection dates	10–11 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Scott

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Norma Robson
Headteacher	Mrs Vivien Gasston
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Front Street East Boldon Tyne and Wear NE36 0SW
Telephone number	0191 5367292
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than most infant schools. It serves an area of South Tyneside where socio-economic conditions are favourable. About one fifth of pupils come from less advantaged areas but few overall are eligible for free school meals. Nearly all pupils are from White British families and the pupil population is fairly stable. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

East Boldon Infants is an outstanding school, where children blossom. Its wonderful atmosphere stems from a high focus on basic skills, a rich learning environment and emphasis on developing character and self-reliance. Pupils acquire a real zest for learning and succeed greatly in their work and personal development. Standards are routinely high in all subjects. Parents are understandably delighted by their children's education and value the close attention given to each child's needs. 'My child has made amazing progress in a short time,' was a typical comment. The school prospers because of the excellent leadership of the headteacher, supported by extremely able senior staff and governors. The committed and highly effective staff not only all share the school's vision, but embrace it fully. This produces considerable consistency throughout the school in all aspects of its work.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Significantly above average standards are maintained year upon year at Year 2. They succeed in reading, writing and mathematics and also have high level skills in other subjects, such as speaking, listening and information and communication technology (ICT). All pupils achieve equally well because inclusion is at the heart of all that it does. Pupils of all abilities benefit. Musically talented pupils, for example, will receive coaching by professional musicians from The Sage Centre.

Pupils achieve very well in all year groups because teaching is stimulating and challenging. A rich and diverse curriculum captivates pupils, sustains their interest and provides a wealth of experiences. Pupils are given very clear guidelines about what they need to learn and how they can improve. Teachers insist gently but firmly on accuracy, care and quality at all times so pupils produce thoughtful, impressive work. One Year 1 pupil, immersed in the tale of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, described the troll as having, 'eyes as fiery yellow as the lava from a volcano'.

Pupils are unusually mature for their age. Soon after they start in the Reception classes, they learn to manage their own lives in school. Initiatives like the new school council and the buddy scheme help develop pupils' social and moral skills although they are not strictly necessary; pupils simply know how to take care of others. Staff are excellent role models, care deeply for the pupils and 'this rubs off on the pupils,' as one parent commented. Behaviour is immaculate and pupils have a great sense of community. Fund-raising is commonplace; links with the church, local businesses and environmental agencies, and multicultural experiences, are fruitful in opening pupils' eyes to the wider world. As such, they are extremely well prepared for life ahead.

Formal systems of care are as excellent as the everyday pastoral care. Pupils have every reason to feel secure in school, knowing that any concern, however small, will be swiftly resolved. They understandably love their school and attendance is good. It could be higher but for bouts of illnesses and term-time holidays. The school works very hard to improve attendance and, indeed, all aspects of the school. It knows itself extremely well. Inspired by the headteacher, the staff are an excellent team and are swift to analyse and tweak any matters that are not quite right. This is why the school is thriving and shows every sign of continuing to offer a first-rate education.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The provision is outstanding. Parents praise the wonderful induction procedures and the smooth progression to Year 1. Children enter the Reception classes with average skills and abilities and, because of excellent teaching, they make very good progress. They exceed the goals expected of five-year-olds by the end of the year in all areas of learning. This conflicts slightly with the school's own assessments which they are currently reviewing. Teachers and teaching assistants maximise opportunities for discussion and independence so that children become confident and relaxed in work, play and discussion. Children not only select activities sensibly but stick to their tasks earnestly. This independence is a great asset to their learning. The imaginative outdoor classroom is used constantly, even in the rain, galvanising children and prompting their sense of adventure. Children loved, for example, experimenting with soil and water, and exulted in the resultant mud pies. The curriculum, therefore, is very varied and stimulating. The provision is very well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas for development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding and standards are high. In the Reception classes, children build strongly on their starting points which are typical for their age. By the end of the year, they exceed the expectations for five-year-olds. Excellent progress continues through Key Stage 1 and ensures that, in the Year 2 teacher assessments, pupils reach significantly above average standards in all main subjects year after year. This is an impressive achievement. Inspection findings and the school data indicate that pupils in the current Year 2 are likely to continue in the same vein. All pupils achieve equally well because of the high priority given by teachers to the individual needs of pupils, whatever they may be. Their skills and knowledge are extensive. Pupils are very confident when speaking and listening, and have a wide vocabulary and mature expression for their age. In addition, pupils develop very good computer skills from an early age. For example, children in Reception often surf the internet to unearth snippets of information.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and healthy; for example, they wholeheartedly embrace physical activities, such as 'Activate' each morning. They behave extremely well. They are very sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, go out of their way to support one another, and warm to responsibilities like 'Playground Pals'. Pupils display excellent attitudes to their work. They concentrate intently in lessons, respond enthusiastically to teachers' questions and cooperate earnestly with partners. They settle to their tasks rapidly and take great pride in the presentation of their work. They clearly love coming to school and attendance is good.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The calm, thought provoking lessons enable pupils to reflect on important issues and promote a cheery sense of well-being. Assemblies are snappy and uplifting, and highly effective at promoting self-esteem. A host of

cultural encounters includes visits to a Chinese centre and the performance of dragon dances in school. Pupils contribute very well to their own community and beyond through, for instance, the donation of toys at Christmas to a North East children's charity and developing recreational facilities with a local action group. Business links, environmental programmes and excellent basic skills, not least in communication, ensure that pupils have an outstanding basis for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Central to the pupils' excellent progress is the outstanding teaching throughout the school, but particularly in Year 2. All staff cooperate extremely well to plan lessons that are suitably adapted for individual pupils. Pupils learn very quickly because expectations are high and work is nearly always very challenging. Pupils in Year 2, for example, are expected to write lengthy sentences with connectives; Year 1 pupils explore similes. Teachers explain new learning succinctly so that pupils readily understand, and reinforce learning with imaginative resources and activities. Funky lettering on the interactive whiteboard certainly highlighted spelling rules in one lesson. 'Hot-seating' with 'Captain Scott' (a Year 2 girl) in the chair prompted an avalanche of questions about the Antarctic. The composition and performance by Reception children of music to accompany 'Incey Wincey Spider' were truly valued by their peers and staff, leaving them bursting with pride.

Relationships are excellent. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, receive excellent support from well trained teaching assistants. Pupils are fully engaged because their thinking is constantly stimulated. They really appreciate the skilful marking of their work and are highly motivated by the excellent range of opportunities in lessons. Regular homework strengthens pupils' progress and involves parents closely in their children's learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is excellent. There is a sharp focus on the key skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT but not to the exclusion of other subjects. Indeed, it is the very diversity and richness of the curriculum that grip pupils' interest and fortify their learning. For example, writing is taught through fascinating contexts, such as the breeding habits of the emperor penguin, so that pupils absorb technical vocabulary and are inspired to write in detail. Inclusion is intrinsic to the school's work. Parents rightly praise the way teachers adapt the curriculum to the individual needs of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils' personal and academic development benefits greatly from the myriad visits, visitors, activities and special weeks, such as a workshop with a Chinese cook, Indian dancing and the 'Cinderella Experience' when pupils had to design ball gowns and learn to waltz.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding care, guidance and support make a major contribution to pupils' progress, enjoyment and well-being. Pastoral care is a particular strength. Each pupil is valued and very well supported, and all are encouraged to learn from their mistakes. Pupils are very comfortable

sharing any concerns with an adult, and speak very warmly of their rapport with all adults in school. Parents endorse this; they appreciate the approachability of staff and praise the high level of care. Child protection systems, risk assessments and procedures for safeguarding children are in place. Vulnerable pupils are very well cared for due to the excellent links with external agencies. Aided by close communication with parents, staff know all pupils very well and meet their academic needs. All pupils' learning is carefully assessed as they move through the school, so teachers can set challenging targets formally as well as through quiet, highly pertinent advice in lessons or following homework.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The extremely thoughtful, astute and firm leadership of the headteacher ensures that the school is not only strongly focused on maintaining high standards but also on giving pupils a rich educational experience, in the widest sense. The senior management team and governors are all fully involved and highly effective in supporting and shaping the school's vision. Staff are motivated and empowered to be versatile and creative. The professional cohesion and camaraderie of all staff at the school explain why provision is so consistent.

The school's self-evaluation is outstanding, if somewhat modest. Even though the school is wholly aware of its strengths and how it could do better, it was reluctant to regard itself as excellent. Yet this is a school that refuses to rest on its laurels. Senior staff monitor the school constantly and minutely. Any slight cause for concern, such as a blip in writing results in 2007, is scrupulously analysed and suitable actions set in motion. The school improvement plan is owned by all staff and is patently very effective, although rather a lengthy document. Governors also keep a sharp eye on the school's work, notably through their 'Governor of the Month' scheme.

The school has made excellent progress since the last inspection. It has maintained high standards and fine-tuned elements such as the use of the outdoor classroom for Reception children. Parents sing the school's praises. They especially like that their children are very happy because they are fulfilled, valued and cared for. One added, 'I can't think of anything to complain about.' The school's development over time and the cohesive determination of the staff show that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

14 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of East Boldon Infants' School, South Tyneside, NE36 0SW

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school. Mrs Gleghorn and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and your teachers, and getting to know what makes your school tick. Your opinions were very important to us.

Like you, we think that your school is excellent and quickly saw why you love coming to school every day. It is such an exciting place so you become very willing to learn all the new things that your teachers think up for you. They are very keen for you to succeed, and you respond impressively. Your concentration in lessons is great, as is your attention to detail and keenness to produce neat and interesting work. Some of your writing was truly impressive. We also know that you appreciate the help given by teachers to help you become even better.

It is no surprise, therefore, that your standards of your work are excellent – not just in reading and mathematics, but also in writing (which is harder), speaking, listening and ICT. We did not have the chance to look at other subjects in detail but they seemed good. Your teachers make sure that you learn lots of exciting things in and out of the classroom. You certainly learn a lot about the world outside. You also feel very safe in school because the school takes great care of you all. In turn, you look after one another extremely well. Your behaviour is outstanding and you are very sensible for your age.

Your headteacher does a wonderful job. She keeps you (and your teachers) on your toes so that you always do your best. Together with all the staff and governors, she makes sure that standards are high year after year, that your work excites you and that you grow into responsible individuals. The school is always keen to become even better and we like to suggest ways in which the school can do this. However, because your school is so good, we do not have any suggestions!

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Lead inspector