

South Gosforth First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108439
Local authority	Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Inspection number	377753
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	Christine Inkster HMI

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	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Campbell
Headteacher	Peter Coles
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2006
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Introduction

Inspection team

Christine Inkster
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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by nine teachers and made short visits to lessons to observe where pupils were taught specific skills, for example in reading. Two 'learning walks' were also conducted to observe teaching in foundation subjects. A number of pupils read to the inspectors. Inspectors held meetings with pupils, members of staff, representatives of the governing body and held discussions informally with a number of parents and carers before school. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, records of attendance and pupils' attainment and progress, pupils' work and arrangements to secure pupils' health and safety. Inspectors also analysed the responses to the questionnaires received from 88 parents and carers and also those from 80 pupils and 21 staff.

Information about the school

South Gosforth First is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is similar to that found nationally as is the percentage who speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The number of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is lower than the national average. There are very few pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school serves a family residence for students attending a local university. Comparison with the current floor standard is not applicable as pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4. There is a privately run out-of-hours childcare provision which is subject to a separate inspection. The latest report is available on the Ofsted website.

The headteacher is currently absent and the deputy headteacher is the acting headteacher. There has been some staffing turbulence with a few classes being taught by teachers on short-term or supply contracts.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Pupils achieve well and by the end of Year 4, their attainment is well-above expectations, often two years above the levels typical for their age. A relentless focus on teaching sounds and letters ensures that by the age of six, most pupils are confident readers. Children make a good start in the Reception Year, and from Years 1 to 4 the very large majority make consistently good progress. All groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are also enabled to achieve well.
- The quality of teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Strengths in teaching include when teachers provide challenging work for pupils, particularly for those who are more-able and the sensitive way in which any misconceptions are immediately addressed so that pupils can learn from any mistakes and continue to improve. In less successful teaching, pupils are not given enough time to work independently and, if they have to sit for too long listening to the teacher, they lose concentration.
- The overall good curriculum is broad and balanced and there is a strong focus on developing good basic skills in literacy and numeracy. However, the curriculum is not always exciting or stimulating enough to inspire pupils to develop a deep love of learning.
- The school is a cohesive, harmonious and safe community. Pupils from all nationalities get along well together and their behaviour is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and that they can approach an adult if they have a concern or worry.
- Leaders and managers work effectively as a team to ensure that all pupils achieve well and are kept safe. They are effective in tackling weaknesses and identifying appropriate points for improvement but monitoring procedures are not as systematic as they could be and action plans are not always precise enough to indicate how success can be measured. Staff have indicated that they would appreciate more opportunities for professional development in order to develop their leadership and other skills further. The governing body contributes well to the life of the school and effectively holds the school to account.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen existing processes and procedures to check on pupils' work and progress to enable all school leaders to plan more precisely for the next stage of the school's development by:
 - implementing a more systematic programme of monitoring activities for all leaders to help inform school improvement planning
 - ensuring there are enough opportunities for professional development for all members of staff.
- Enhance the curriculum so that it provides more stimulating and exciting opportunities to ensure that pupils develop a deep love of learning and are encouraged to share their achievements with parents, carers and others.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire rightly believe that their children, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are making good progress. Pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points which have been above those typical for their age in previous years but more recently have been broadly typical for children of their age. In the Reception classes, good attention to developing children's basic skills and knowledge in all areas of learning enables them to start Year 1 with abilities above those expected for their age. Data show that attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 have been consistently well-above average over several years. Attainment in writing declined slightly last year in Year 2 and leaders are successfully addressing this by promoting boys' writing, in particular. All groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and who are known to be eligible for free school meals are also enabled to achieve well. This is because of well-targeted support from teachers, teaching assistants and learning support assistants and work which is closely matched to their needs.

Across the school, pupils make particularly strong gains in reading. This is because of the systematic programme of teaching phonics (the system of learning to read linking letters to the sounds they make) and opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills across all subjects. In reading, by the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 1, their attainment is well above average and by the end of Year 4 most are attaining levels two years above those expected for their age. Pupils read with confidence, fluency and expression.

The quality of learning in lessons is at least good and sometimes outstanding. In a lesson in Year 2, pupils investigated 'real' mini-beasts using magnifying glasses and through watching short video clips, then described the movements of the mini-beasts in their imaginative writing. One pupil, bubbling with enthusiasm, announced 'this is so cool!' In an English lesson in Year 3/4, pupils produced high-quality persuasive advertisements, using descriptive language. Pupils make good progress in their basic skills and there are opportunities for them to practise their skills in reading, writing, communication and

mathematics in other subjects. Good attention is paid to help pupils to spell accurately, punctuate their work correctly and, in the Reception classes, to develop good pencil control and form their letters correctly. Pupils are articulate and are able to give well-thought-out reasons for their answers. They have positive attitudes to learning and work cooperatively in pairs and groups. However, where learning is less effective, pupils do not have enough opportunities to work independently or in groups and if they sit listening to the teacher for too long, they lose concentration.

Quality of teaching

A very large majority of parents and carers are correct in their belief that teaching in the school is good. However, some parents and carers rightly expressed their views that, although teaching provides their children with well-developed basic skills, it is not always exciting enough to enthuse their children. Teachers have good subject knowledge and help pupils to build up and apply knowledge and skills very quickly across all subjects. In most lessons, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and skills are developed systematically as pupils move through the school. Adults ask perceptive and probing questions and these help pupils to think deeply and use varied vocabulary in their answers. Tasks and concepts are clearly explained so that pupils know exactly what they have to do. In the best teaching, work is closely matched to pupils' individual needs and adults check pupils' understanding and quickly address any misconceptions in order to achieve higher outcomes. Skilled teaching assistants and learning support staff provide good support when working with pupils individually or in small groups enabling them to achieve as well as they are able. Assessment is used very effectively to provide challenging work for pupils and the level of challenge increases throughout the lesson. Where teaching is not quite so effective, learning and progress are held back because the pace is slower, activities are not interesting enough to engage pupils and they become restless. On occasions, there is an overuse of worksheets which restricts pupils' opportunities to write at length and express their ideas fully. Pupils are involved in assessing their own work and that of their classmates and they say that they find marking and feedback helpful. However, a few pupils indicate that they are not always sure about how well they are doing or how to improve their work.

While the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils well, it is not always exciting and stimulating enough to help pupils develop a deep love of learning. There are some activities which have captured pupils' imagination, for example, when they attended a 'circus skills' day and wrote extensively about their experiences. Special activity days, such as those on the way of life of Greeks, stimulate pupils' interest as they dress up and are involved in a range of activities in order to experience lifestyles in these times. Some activities, such as learning French or Italian, enterprise projects where pupils work cooperatively with others, including a project on building 'tetrahedrons' and learning about those less fortunate than themselves through a project on Kenya, encourage pupils to reflect thoughtfully on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most parents, carers and pupils have positive views of pupils' typical behaviour and almost all believe that pupils are kept safe. Inspection evidence supports these views. Pupils' behaviour is good in most lessons and around the school, although they sometimes become restless if they are not actively engaged in their learning. Pupils are considerate and helpful and show respect to one another and to adults. They are confident and have high self-esteem. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds work and play together harmoniously.

A very few parents and carers expressed concerns about bullying. Inspectors investigated this through discussions about different types of bullying with pupils. Pupils said they did not have concerns because it happens very rarely and the adults are always there to help them. They said there were a very few incidents of name-calling but once addressed by staff had never happened again. Over time, inappropriate behaviour, including bullying and racist incidents, have been very rare and if they have occurred, have been promptly and appropriately dealt with. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, what constitutes safe and unsafe behaviour and know what actions they can take to keep themselves safe, for example, they know how to deal with risks associated with the use of technologies. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and, as one pupil said, 'school feels like home'. Attendance is consistently above average and pupils are punctual and eager to attend school.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers work effectively as a team to help drive improvement in the school. This has enabled well-above-average standards and good and sometimes better progress to be maintained over a considerable number of years, demonstrating leaders' ambitious vision for pupils to achieve highly. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and are held accountable for the progress their pupils make. Written evidence shows that the headteacher has regularly monitored and accurately evaluated the quality of teaching and the amount of progress made by pupils, clearly identifying where any improvements need to be made. Following the recent absence of the headteacher, senior leaders are rising to the challenge of maintaining and improving upon the school's performance. Although, middle leaders have had more formal opportunities in the past to monitor the quality of work in their areas of responsibility, they have not had the opportunity to do so more recently. They have, nevertheless, worked together closely as a staff and shared information informally in order to identify appropriate areas for improvement. This is now beginning to be addressed and plans are being put in place to implement a more structured system involving all leaders. A small minority of staff indicated that they feel there are not enough opportunities for professional development, although links are now being developed with other schools in the cluster in order to share good practice. Although self-evaluation is accurate and the school has identified the correct priorities for improvement in the school development plan, these plans are not quite detailed enough so that the impact of actions can be measured more precisely.

The governing body supports the work of the school and holds it effectively to account, particularly in respect of monitoring the achievement of pupils, as school data are regularly shared with them. The governing body is rigorous in ensuring its arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are implemented effectively. At the time of the inspection, there was no evidence of any discrimination and the school promotes equality for all pupils effectively through ensuring that all pupils make equal amounts of progress. Any underachievement and the reasons for it are quickly identified and action is taken to overcome this.

The curriculum is good and meets pupils' individual needs well. It enables them to apply their wide range of knowledge and skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology across the curriculum and to achieve well in all subjects. There is a range of educational visits and visitors into school to enhance pupils' learning but on a day-to-day basis the curriculum is not always as exciting and stimulating as it could be in order to enable pupils to be more highly engaged and enthused in their learning. This was

rightly identified as a concern by a few parents and carers who also indicated they would like to be more involved in their child's learning. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn modern foreign languages including French and Italian and opportunities to participate in multicultural and themed days, including, for example, African story-telling or enabling pupils to reflect on the lives of children in Kenya. These activities help to promote pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have respect for those from faiths and cultures different from their own and pupils of different backgrounds work and play together in harmony. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities and enjoy working cooperatively together.

Strong teamwork, clear vision, effective self-evaluation and a shared sense of purpose have ensured that the school is continuing to reach high standards of attainment and demonstrates that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



10 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of South Gosforth First School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1YF

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting with you, listening to you read and looking at your work.

You go to a good school. You are attaining well-above-expected standards in your work and are making good progress, including those of you who find learning more difficult. This is because teaching is good and some is outstanding. You are developing important skills in literacy and numeracy which will enable you to be successful when you go to your next school. You told us you feel very safe in school and that bullying is very rare. However, you know you can tell an adult if you have any worries or concerns. Most of you told us in the questionnaire and in discussions that behaviour is good. School leaders do their best to make sure that you achieve well and are kept safe.

There are still some things which could make your school even better. We have asked the staff to:

- make sure that all leaders check on your work more often so that they can ensure that you all make as much progress as you possibly can and enable them to make more detailed plans to improve the school even further
- make some of your lessons more fun and exciting so that you all enjoy your learning and have more opportunities to share your achievements with your parents, carers and others.

We hope you will all continue to do your very best at South Gosforth First School and we wish you every success in the future. Thank you for making our visit such an interesting and pleasant experience.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster
Her Majesty's Inspector

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