

George Washington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133473
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	301751
Inspection dates	22–23 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Margaret Armstrong

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Laidler
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2003
School address	Well Bank Road Washington Tyne and Wear NE37 1NL
Telephone number	0191 2193735
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school which is situated in an area of social disadvantage in the north of Washington, near Sunderland. When children start school their attainment is generally well below what is typical for their age; many have delayed language development and/or speech difficulties. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than average as is the percentage who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school receives additional funding from the Local Authority to support a small number of pupils who have a statement of special education need in relation to their hearing impairment. The large majority of pupils are from White British families and the remainder are from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is lower than that found nationally. A small number of pupils are looked after. The school provides breakfast and after school clubs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. Over the past three years standards have risen. The improvements are due to the focused leadership of the headteacher during a difficult period in the school's development and the determination of the senior leadership team to raise standards. As a result, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. The school involves parents and pupils well in evaluating the quality of its work and issues raised are quickly acted upon. Most parents are very appreciative of the work of the school and speak highly of the 'lovely warm and supportive atmosphere' which pervades it.

Standards are average and pupils achieve well. When children start school their level of development is well below that which is typical for their age group, particularly in their ability to communicate and in their personal and social development. The good provision in the Foundation Stage means children quickly become active learners and achieve well. Pupils continue to make good progress as they move through the school and, by the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable receive high quality support and achieve well. The progress of higher attaining pupils is more erratic. This is because teachers do not always make effective use of pupil progress information to plan sufficiently challenging work for them.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Relationships are good and, as a result, pupils are well behaved and manage their emotions well. All pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through their involvement in fund raising for a range of charities and by participating in the work of the school council. Pupils enjoy school and this is best summed up in the words of one pupil who reported 'I really enjoy learning. Lessons are really fun!' Their good learning, along with the school's very strong emphasis on personal development, ensures they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Teaching and learning are good with outstanding features. This has resulted, for example, in the improved standards in English at the end of Key Stage 2. Relationships are good and lessons are interesting, therefore pupils work hard and enjoy learning. Pupils respond well to the lively, creative curriculum which excites and motivates them. The partnerships the school has with outside agencies are outstanding. As a result, the curriculum is enriched by a good range of high quality activities that are available both inside and outside of lesson time.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher leads and manages her staff very well. As a result, teachers and support staff work very effectively together as a team and this has resulted in an outstanding level of care and support for vulnerable pupils. This is particularly the case for pupils with hearing impairment, whose specific needs are met very well. Governance is good. Governors are well informed and they support the school well through new initiatives. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The very good level of care given to children helps them to settle quickly so they learn to work and play together in a safe and interesting environment. Good assessment procedures help teachers plan activities which take account of children's prior experiences and learning needs. As a result, teachers provide a good balance

between activities led by an adult and those initiated by children and they keep a close check on how well they are doing. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other vulnerable pupils make good progress because of the very effective adult support. By the end of the Foundation Stage the majority of children have not reached the level expected for their age except in their attitudes to learning and physical development. However, they make good progress in relation to their low starting points. The good start they make in the Foundation Stage prepares them well for the next stage in their learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory following a period of staff absence.

The school has a good quality action plan in place to help improve practice further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers make better use of information about pupil progress to plan effectively for higher attaining pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average and pupils achieve well. In 2007, standards were below average for Year 2 pupils, except in reading where they were average. The performance of higher attaining pupils was below expected levels, especially in writing and mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 made good progress to reach average standards. This indicates a positive trend of improvement over the past five years. A key factor in the school's success has been the use of a well-planned programme of 'Booster Support' which has resulted in pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those from minority ethnic groups and looked after children making good progress. Pupils who have English as an additional language are well supported so they soon play an active part in lessons and achieve well. Higher attaining pupils performed well in English and mathematics, although they did not do as well as expected in science. Over the past year, the school has made raising achievement in writing a priority area for development. As a result, standards are rising because pupils are more skilled in writing for a range of purposes. Although there is some variation in the attainment of boys and girls there is no discernible pattern.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6 they are confident and articulate individuals who show empathy and concern for others. They show particularly caring attitudes towards those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They behave well because relationships are good and they know what is expected of them. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and treat each other with respect. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in improving levels of attendance. The school promotes healthy lifestyles well. This enables pupils to make informed choices about the food they eat and to take regular exercise. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and they are confident issues such as bullying would not be tolerated in their school. They are a credit to the school and take a great deal of pride in their contributions to the community. They act as 'school helpers', organise the school fruit shop and support the work of the 'People's Kitchen' in Newcastle. The good grounding pupils receive in their social and basic skills prepares them well for the next stages of learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. There is some outstanding teaching. Relationships are good and, as a result, pupils are keen to work hard and do their best. Pupils say they enjoy lessons and teachers work diligently to engage their interest and this promotes good learning. For example, in an excellent Year 6 writing lesson, pupils made very good progress in their ability to prepare a newspaper report in a journalistic style because teaching was brisk and expectations high. Generally, lessons are well planned and resources, including computer technology, used well to enrich learning. Where teaching is less effective, planning does not clearly identify the level of challenge for higher attaining pupils. Where this is the case, the pace of learning is slower and the level of pupils' engagement less secure. Teaching assistants are well trained and provide high quality, targeted support. This means pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the increasing number with additional needs are able to play a full part in lessons and achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and meets all statutory requirements. The curriculum is creative and engaging and promotes good achievement in pupils' personal and academic development. This is seen in the way the school adapts the timetable to enable older pupils to take responsibility and spend additional time on creative activities, such as music, physical education and the performing arts. It is enriched well through strong links with the wider community. These include visits from Tai Chi teachers and specialists from the local sports college, visits out of school to London and Derwent Hill Residential Centre and opportunities to participate in Enterprise Weeks. The school has excellent links with other providers. For example, the very effective links with the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People has resulted in a whole school approach to the use of British Sign Language. As a result, pupils with hearing impairment can participate fully in the activities provided by the school. The opportunities for learning beyond the classroom are very good and pupils are very keen to attend the wide range of sporting and creative activities which are available.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The very good links with outside agencies ensure care and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with hearing impairment, are very good. Procedures for child protection, risk assessment and health and safety are fully in place. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure because they know an adult will help them if they have a problem. Induction arrangements are good and this helps pupils new to the school to settle in quickly and feel part of the school community. The school has a good partnership with parents and this supports learning well. Guidance is satisfactory. Strong links with local secondary schools ensures a smooth transfer as pupils move to the next stage in their learning. However, systems for tracking pupil progress are not yet used consistently across the school. As a result, pupils do not always know exactly what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior leadership team work together very effectively and this has helped them develop a good team spirit in the school. There is an excellent training programme in place which enables all staff to develop their skills and expertise. This has resulted, for example, in the newly formed Phase Leadership Team sharing a focus on raising standards and achievement. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly and support is provided when required. As a result, teaching is good and standards are rising. The school's self evaluation procedures are comprehensive and provide an accurate picture of what is working and what needs attention. Senior leaders analyse data carefully and set challenging targets for improvement. They have not yet ensured pupil progress information is used effectively across the school. Governance is good. Governors know the school well and play a full part in its development. They have made certain there is a very good range of resources to support pupils' learning. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

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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?	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	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

24 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of George Washington Primary School, Sunderland, NE37 1NL

I am writing to thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school. We really enjoyed spending time with you and listening to your views about your school and why you enjoy learning.

You have a good school. Many of you told us how much you enjoy school and that you think you are getting on well. We agree with you! We were impressed with your behaviour and the way in which you look after each other. We enjoyed visiting your classrooms and we were pleased to see how hard you work with your teachers and other adults. You develop into kind, thoughtful young people with a strong awareness of right and wrong. We think you do a lot to make your school a good place to learn. Well done to the lunchtime helpers and librarians! You told us you really like the after school clubs, such as French, art and music and we can understand why. Your school works very closely with outside groups like the Sports Partnership to make sure there are lots of interesting things for you to do.

Your teachers take excellent care of you and many of you told us how kind the adults are and how safe you feel in school. Even though your school is good, your headteacher, staff and governors want to make it even better. You are given work that interests you and helps you make good progress. We have suggested that your school tracks your progress carefully and makes sure some of you are challenged with harder work. You can help by always doing your best and continuing to involve yourself fully in the life of the school.

On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you very much for your help and wish you all good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Armstrong

Lead Inspector