

Stranton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111591
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	378321
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2012
Lead inspector	Clive Petts

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Hart
Headteacher	Neil Nottingham
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Clive Petts

John Pattinson

Lesley Richardson

Additional Inspector

Additional Inspector

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 21 lessons taught by 13 class teachers. They also observed intervention activities for small groups of pupils, talked to different groups of pupils about their learning and scrutinised in detail the work in pupils' books. Inspectors checked pupils' reading across the age range. In addition, inspectors held discussions with pupils, members of the governing body, staff and the school leadership adviser. The inspectors observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation, including the school's records relating to pupils' progress and achievement, evidence relating to leadership and management, monitoring and evaluation, records of behaviour and safeguarding. They also took into account the questionnaires returned by 78 parents and carers, 97 pupils and 47 staff.

Information about the school

Stranton is a larger than average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage with none at the early stage of learning English. Almost three times the average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is less than average. There is a greater number of pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable than is found in many schools. The school meets the current floor standards which set out the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school extends its services in that it provides a breakfast and after-school club each day. The on-site children's centre provision, not managed by the governing body, is subject to a separate inspection and will receive its own inspection report. The school manages and is fully integrated with Stranton Community Centre. The headteacher is a recognised National Leader of Education and the school designated as a National Support School.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school. Its success is the result of the senior leader's constant drive to raise pupils' aspirations, self-esteem and improve achievement. Parents and carers enjoy excellent relationships with staff and appreciate the high quality of care their children receive.
- Achievement is outstanding. Children arrive with skills significantly below the levels typical for their age and make excellent progress to reach attainment above the national average by the end of Year 6. All groups of pupils make outstanding progress. Rapid progress is made in reading, writing and mathematics. Reading skills and the enjoyment of books are promoted very effectively, although a few less pupils achieve higher levels in reading than in other subjects because more advanced skills are not quite so well embedded.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Some is inspirational. Teachers use imaginative approaches to shape activities to match pupils' individual abilities and needs and ensure all are fully engaged. High quality, accurately targeted intervention and support from teaching assistants contributes exceptionally well to the pupils' learning. As a result pupils thrive.
- Pupils' great enthusiasm is evident in their very high levels of engagement in lessons. Collaboration and cooperative in and out of lessons is exceptional. Pupils are considerate, demonstrate a high regard for one another and are safety conscious. Their behaviour including those potentially vulnerable is exemplary. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted remarkably well.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's inspirational leadership has galvanised the commitment of staff and ensured that all share his quest for excellence. He is adeptly supported by the deputy headteacher. Highly effective leadership of teaching makes certain that there is a relentless focus on achievement in all learning. The excellent curriculum provides rich opportunities for high quality learning. The astutely led governing body have an insightful and accurate understanding of school performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the number of pupils reaching above average levels in reading by:
 - broadening pupils' appreciation of authors' different styles or themes in their writing
 - finding even more ways to engage parents and carers in supporting their children's enjoyment of reading.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is outstanding, with a very large majority of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, sustaining rapid progress throughout the school. Almost all parents and carers agree that their children make at least good progress and that their particular needs are met. Pupils learn exceptionally well because the wide range of rich curriculum experiences constantly engages them and stimulates their thinking. Rigorous systems to check each pupil's development ensure that intervention and support is precisely targeted. The school has a strong focus on improving early communication skills, teaching the essential skills of linking letters and sounds and how words tell a story. This is underpinned by a wide variety of rich first-hand experiences to fuel interest and thinking. Consequently, there is a marked improvement in reading, writing and numeracy skills since the previous inspection. To close the slight gap in the number of pupils reaching above average levels in reading compared with writing and mathematics, even more opportunities are being created to nurture pupils' interest and enjoyment in reading. For example, after reading about African culture Year 6 pupils talked excitedly about their forthcoming London visit to see the stage version of the Lion King. Learning through linking subjects together in thought-provoking ways is a strong feature of the school. It results in pupils learning essential skills of collaboration, cooperation, speaking, listening and numeracy in active ways. For example, visiting the nearby vicarage to discover what Victorian life was like.

From starting points significantly below those typical for their age, and often with underdeveloped speech and language skills, children make rapid progress developing self-confidence, independence and self-control throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils continue to make rapid progress in Key Stage 1, although attainment at the end of Year 2 is below average. In Key Stage 2, progress accelerates further and attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average. In mathematics, progress is a little more rapid than in English. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve exceptionally well, because their needs are extremely well met. Attainment in reading by Year 2 is below average; younger pupils demonstrate increasing confidence making sense of new words and using reading to discover and question. In Year 6, considerable progress is made in nurturing the interests of all pupils in reading and raising attainment. For example, one boy described the fun in reading 'Horrid Henry' books. Despite this not all pupils, particularly a few of the more-able, have mastered complex skills, such as appreciation of an author's style. Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Year 6 is a little above average.

Quality of teaching

Over time the quality of teaching is outstanding. Almost all parents and carers agree. Teachers use puzzles, outdoor learning, visits, partner talks and debates to develop skills, knowledge and understanding in fun ways. Pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted highly successfully. Teachers assess thoroughly and know their pupils extremely well. Lessons are planned in considerable detail drawing upon the rich opportunities of the curriculum to stimulate pupils' interest and challenge thinking. All activities are very well matched to individual needs, abilities, interests and age; lesson tasks constantly challenge pupils' views and systematically build upon their prior learning. Every pupil has challenging and measurable targets. Positive marking is extremely helpful with clear guidance for improvement provided. Any slips in the rate of pupils' progress are quickly identified and corrective action taken. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive specific, precisely planned support from teachers and their assistants. Every opportunity is given for pupils to work independently, such as when solving problems themselves or sharing their ideas with a partner. This leads to pupils of all abilities being highly confident and self-reliant. In the Nursery and in Reception classes, children are provided with progressive, challenging opportunities to think creatively, investigate and pursue their own curiosity both in and outdoors.

When progress is most rapid, thought-provoking questioning calls for pupils to explain their solutions and justify their reasoning. Effective use of new technology adds to the variety and pace of learning. The teaching of reading is systematically tackled throughout the school. Younger children whose skills are underdeveloped are identified early and given individual support to ensure they are able to cope when they start Year 1. Older pupils are encouraged to write book reviews and write to authors. While these activities make learning authentic, occasionally opportunities are missed to engage parents and carers even more in their children's reading and to promote the higher-order skills of older pupils, such as discussing an author's chosen theme or style.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The high quality of care and support, high expectations and clear boundaries for behaviour all ensure that all pupils feel safe during lessons and at social times. The breakfast club provides a calm, friendly and happy start to the day and the after-school club provides opportunities to develop interests and skills. The exemplary behaviour of all groups of pupils, including those potentially vulnerable, is characterised by high levels of engagement, consideration and cooperation in and out of lessons. Pupils report that this is typical of any day. Their keenness and willingness to work hard creates a highly positive climate for learning. Added to their above average attendance, these highly positive attributes enhance their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The 'golden time' system of monitoring behaviour is respected and appreciated by pupils of all ages and backgrounds. Pupils speak with obvious delight about its benefits and rewards. Conversations with pupils demonstrate that they have a very secure understanding of what constitutes bullying in its various forms. They speak confidently about how they can deal with any worries and concerns. Relationships with all staff are excellent and the mutual respect is evident throughout the day. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and are knowledgeable about risk and danger. This includes the potential threats of new technology.

No concerns were raised by parents and carers about any aspect of behaviour, bullying or safety. One comment, 'Stranton is such a caring school, I am proud my children attend',

sums up their views. Inspectors saw nothing less than excellent behaviour, politeness and high levels of pupils' commitment to their work and play.

Leadership and management

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has led the school with passion, drive and energy. Consequently, the school is continually building upon its strengths. The reflective and self-critical approaches of senior leaders ensure that any inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning are precisely pinpointed and decisively remedied. As a result, the school demonstrates a strong capacity for continued improvement. The whole staff are a closely-knit team providing strong leadership in their areas of responsibility. Teachers have an excellent understanding of how to use assessments of pupils' development to drive up and sustain achievement. They maintain a firm focus upon developing pupils' application of literacy, numeracy and personal skills. Performance management and professional development have contributed very effectively to improvement in these areas of priority. The outstanding curriculum is sharply focused on enhancing basic skills. Art and sport receive a high priority in the curriculum. The extensive range of enrichment activities which includes visits, visitors and after-school clubs promotes pupils love of learning exceptionally well. An excellent partnership with a Romanian school helps to support pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The excellent governing body are knowledgeably led and are fully immersed in school life on a day-to-day basis. They are totally committed to providing a community resource of high quality, 'Where only the best is good enough'. The school engages parents and carers really well and enjoys their confidence and trust. They are increasingly involved in improving their own skills to support their children's learning ever more effectively. Any gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils are tackled decisively, resulting in no group of pupils falling behind others. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those potentially vulnerable because of their circumstances are thoughtfully integrated in all aspects of school life to enable them to achieve success. This is because equal opportunities are promoted so effectively. Safeguarding meets requirements with much very effective practice underpinning the high quality of care and support provided for the pupils. Integrated approaches to childcare, adult learning and school provision on the site reflect the school's excellent partnerships with the local community and external providers. Highly effective use is made of specialist agencies, in close partnership with school staff, to increase the range and quality of learning opportunities for pupils.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.



21 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stranton Primary School, Hartlepool, TS25 1SQ

We want to thank you all for the truly friendly welcome that you gave the inspection team when we visited your school to see how well you were learning. We really did enjoy talking to you and hearing the many interesting things you had to say.

Stranton is an outstanding school. We were extremely impressed by the high quality of care and support provided for you by your staff. You told us that your staff constantly encourage and support you to accomplish as much as you possibly can. We were delighted by your exemplary behaviour. You describe that you feel totally safe and happy as a result. You also told us of your pride in helping the school to constantly improve.

The headteacher and the governing body are determined that you achieve success in all that you attempt and do. You are making rapid progress improving your skills, although improvements developing your reading skills and interests are not always quite so rapid for some of you. We have asked the school to provide even more opportunities to practise your reading skills and constantly encourage you to enjoy a wide range of reading.

You can all play your part by continuing to attend regularly and continuing to work as hard as you possibly can. All the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Clive Petts
Lead Inspector

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