

Biddick Hall Junior School

Chesterton Road, South Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE34 9SP

Inspection dates 16–17 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress because teachers plan lively and interesting lessons with activities that are adjusted to meet the needs of different abilities. Teachers mark work regularly so that pupils know how well they are doing and how to reach higher standards.
- Pupils enter the school in Year 3 with reading, writing and numeracy skills that are below average. They make good progress during their time in the school to reach average standards by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are strong leaders who drive improvement because they are determined to raise standards. They regularly observe lessons and check pupils' work in order to tell teachers how they can improve. As a result, achievement has improved and teaching is now good and some is outstanding.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They take pride in their work and always try to do their best. They concentrate well when working independently, but also have good social skills when working with others. Bullying happens on rare occasions, but pupils say it is always dealt with promptly.
- Attendance has improved and is now average.
- There is strong commitment by all staff and by the governance of the school to the raising of standards and to school improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Whilst pupils make good progress in reading and writing, improvements have not yet been rapid enough so that standards by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 remain average.
- The proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in mathematics by the end of Year 6 is below average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 10 teachers. In addition, an inspector made some short visits to small groups being taught by teaching assistants.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work and heard some pupils in Year 3 and Year 6 read.
- The views of the three parents who responded to Parent View, as well as discussions with some parents at the start of the school day, were taken into account.
- Inspectors talked to pupils, senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, subject leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and a representative of the local authority.
- The school's own records of teaching, achievement, behaviour and safeguarding procedures were examined.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in and out of school, for example at playtimes and when walking to church for the Harvest Festival.
- 16 staff submitted their views via a questionnaire.

Inspection team

Christine Cottam, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Hargreaves

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Biddick Hall is a similar size to an average-sized junior school. The vast majority of pupils who join the school in Year 3 come from one infant school and stay until they leave at the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is rising and is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standard which sets the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in reading and writing further so that attainment is above average by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 by:
 - teaching letters and sounds regularly and systematically until pupils have mastered the ability to read and spell unknown words
 - providing training for all staff so that they have a more detailed understanding of the specific skills needed to teach pupils who are still at an early stage of reading
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing and communication skills in other subjects.
- Increase the proportion of more able pupils who reach the higher level 5 in mathematics by:
 - giving pupils more demanding, open-ended investigations and problems to solve so that they can develop their skills at a faster pace
 - moving pupils on more quickly when they have made progress during lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils make good progress in reading and writing so that they reach average standards by the end of Year 6. The school has raised the profile of reading so that pupils are enthusiastic about books and read regularly. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and help them to know how to produce their best work.
- Standards in Year 6 assessments were higher in 2012 than they were in 2011. Standards were slightly higher in mathematics and writing than in reading. This is because a few lower attaining pupils had not made enough progress. Their attainment is now checked more often and they are making better progress as a result. Assessments of the current Year 6 are accurate and show that standards will rise again in 2013.
- Pupils start the school in Year 3 with attainment in literacy and numeracy that is below average. Reading at this age is particularly weak. Pupils rely mainly on initial letter sounds and too many have not yet developed the skills to combine letters to make more complex sounds. This is restricting pupils' ability to read and spell accurately and the school does not yet teach phonics (which is letters and the sounds they make) in a regular and systematic way so that they can make better progress.
- Standards in mathematics have improved so that the proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for their age in 2012 was higher than average. The proportion gaining the higher level 5, as below average. Whilst teachers set work that stretches the majority of the class, they do not always allow more able pupils to move on quickly enough with work that will challenge them to think for themselves.
- Senior leaders track the attainment of all pupils regularly to make sure they are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Where any pupils are falling behind the school takes steps to make sure they catch up.
- Pupils who are supported at school action or school action plus achieve well because their needs are clearly identified and they receive good support in lessons and in separate small groups when needed.
- The attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium is improving so that the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils in the school is less than that found nationally.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils make good progress in lessons because teachers organise a good range of activities that interest pupils. Lessons are planned exceptionally well so that all pupils have opportunities to listen to clear explanations, answer questions and work independently. Teachers know exactly what they want their pupils to learn and make their expectations very clear.
- Teachers use questions skilfully in order to encourage pupils to think carefully and to assess how much they know. Lively lessons involve the majority of pupils answering questions in order to help them to understand. For example, where pupils were learning to write instructions by making sure the imperative verb was at the start of a sentence, they were able to ask their own questions of the teacher to test whether negative instructions beginning with 'don't' also followed the same rule. The teacher's response helped them to answer the question for themselves.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly so that they know how to improve. Teachers make sure their comments are followed up so that pupils learn from their errors. Pupils say this helps them to know how to achieve higher standards.
- Teachers keep a close eye on pupils while they are working and will often change their plans if pupils are not making enough progress. On occasions in mathematics, where pupils have a sound understanding of the work, teachers are missing opportunities to move them on more quickly with their learning.

- Teachers regularly sit with groups of pupils to help them both with the fluency of their reading and their understanding and they make good progress in these sessions. However, teachers' knowledge of early reading skills is insecure and this prevents them from helping pupils to make even faster progress in reading.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are polite and friendly. They have developed good social skills so that they are able to work with partners and in small groups with a minimum of fuss. Adults in school are excellent role models and manage the behaviour of pupils well. Pupils live up to their teachers' high expectations of them, concentrate well and rarely disrupt lessons.
- Pupils are proud of their school and their achievements. They produce their very best work, responding well to the encouragement and praise they get from adults. In some situations during the inspection, such as the harvest festival in a local church, they displayed very mature attitudes and behaved impeccably. In lessons where the teaching is outstanding, pupils relish the opportunity to be responsible for their own learning.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because these high levels of self-control and responsibility are not consistent in all lessons or at all times around the school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and say that it does not happen very often. When it does, pupils know what to do and that it will be dealt with immediately. There are 'buddies' at playtimes who help to organise games, but are also there to listen to pupils who may be upset for any reason. Pupils say they feel safe and they know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including on the internet.
- The school works in close partnership with parents and the education welfare service to encourage good attendance. The attendance of some groups of pupils, such as boys and those eligible for the pupil premium, has been lower in the past, but the gap is now closing. Attendance has improved and is now average.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is led with energy and enthusiasm by senior leaders who work together very well. They have been responsible for driving up standards over the past two years and have improved the quality of teaching so that it is now good. These achievements demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve. Leadership and management are not outstanding because, although the school has identified the need to raise attainment in reading, appropriate training for staff to teach the effective use of letters and sounds has not yet been provided.
- Senior leaders regularly and accurately check the quality of teaching by observing lessons and looking at pupils' work. Teachers are told precisely how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their performance. Teachers have a good knowledge of the Teachers' Standards and constantly strive to do their best to reach them. As a result, teaching is improving rapidly.
- There is a good system to track the progress of pupils. This information is used well to adjust teaching plans where needed and accelerate progress. It is also used to make sure pupils eligible for the pupil premium are making enough progress. Pupil premium funding is used to pay for additional staff to teach pupils in smaller groups. As a result the gap between these pupils and their peers is closing. This demonstrates the school's commitment to ensuring equality and tackling discrimination.
- The school improvement plan accurately identifies the developments that are needed and includes clear and ambitious targets. However, some of the actions are not precise enough, for example those that are planned to improve standards in reading.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school, in particular checking that the

school's judgements about the quality of teaching are accurate.

- The curriculum is planned well to respond to pupils' interests with lots of opportunities to take part in activities outside the school day, such as an outdoor adventure weekend in the Lake District. Whilst pupils have some opportunities to practise their reading, writing and communication skills in other subjects, they need to be able to do this more often in order to reach higher standards. There are too few planned opportunities for more able pupils to solve problems and carry out investigations.
- There are good links with a local school where pupils are from a much broader range of different cultures. This has helped to make sure that pupils have a good understanding of other faiths and cultures which was an issue at the last inspection. The curriculum makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Parents say they appreciate the range of activities on offer at the school and that communication with them is good.
- There are effective safeguarding systems in place to make sure that pupils are safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Has a good knowledge of how well the school is performing. This is because it is involved in plans to improve achievement for pupils.
 - Whilst governors have always been supportive, they are now starting to ask more challenging questions. For example, they were disappointed when standards dipped in 2011 and wanted to know the reasons why.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	108678
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	400998

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Evelyn Winship
Headteacher	Mrs Michelle Collinson
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2010
Telephone number	0191 536 2186
Fax number	0191 519 1430
Email address	admin@biddickhallschool.co.uk

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