

Tow Law Millennium Primary School

Wear Street, Attlee Estate, Tow Law, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL13 4LF

Inspection dates 10–11 January 2013

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.

- The achievement of pupils is good because of the progress they make from the time they join the school.
- The pupil premium funding has been well used to raise the achievement of pupils, especially in Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4.
- Teaching is good because the teachers plan lessons which are generally well matched to the different ability of the pupils.
- Teaching assistants work well with pupils so that pupils are able to make good progress.
- Most pupils enjoy school and they feel safe because they feel that they have adults around them who they could turn to if they need help.
- The behaviour of the pupils is good because all staff follow the school's behaviour policy and they actively encourage the children to show good manners as early as the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The leadership and management are good because the school has taken great care to tackle the areas identified in the last report where they needed to improve.
- Senior leaders work together as a team very successfully, making checks on the work of teachers and pupils, to ensure pupils make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' achievement in writing is not as good as reading, as they are not given enough practice to write at length in all subjects.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching at present.
- The marking of pupils' work in mathematics and topic work is not as good as in literacy.
- While all pupils have targets to achieve, they are not given enough guidance how to reach them, especially in their topic lessons.
- There are not enough opportunities for the pupils to learn, at first hand, about different cultures.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- The inspector visited eight lessons or parts of lessons taught by six different teachers. Two were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and talked to them about how much reading they do, as well as looking at their work in class.
- Discussions took place with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Documents were examined, including those relating to safeguarding, the school's improvement plan and records which show the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, as well as the school's own assessment data.
- The views of six parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were also taken into account, as well the school's own Parental Questionnaire, which surveyed 21 parents.
- In the staff questionnaires the views of 22 teachers, support assistants and ancillary staff were considered, which included views about the school.

Inspection team

Frank Cain, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Tow Law Millennium Primary School is smaller than the average sized school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average, but the proportion at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average.
- There are several mixed-aged classes in the school.
- An increasing number of pupils are joining the school mid-way through the school year.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- Government floor standards, which relate to pupils' attainment and progress, have been met in 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further, so that more is outstanding, by:
 - focusing on making improvements in writing and providing extended opportunities across the school for pupils to write at length
 - when marking pupils' work, making better use of pupils' targets for their written work across the whole curriculum, and referring more often in pupils' books to how well pupils are doing in relation to them
 - improving the marking in mathematics so that it reaches the same standard as in literacy
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice within school to ensure lessons fully stretch and challenge all pupils.
- Strengthen the creative curriculum further by:
 - developing in pupils a better understanding of the multicultural make-up of society in the United Kingdom by giving them more opportunities for first-hand contacts to be made.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children begin school with skills that are below what is typically expected for their age, but by the time they leave the majority are closer to national expectations. There are variations however as the school has an increasing number of pupils who enter the school mid-way during the school year. When they do enter they benefit from good teaching. Overall all pupils make good progress, which is an improvement on the previous report.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage the outdoor facilities, in particular, are good and there are lots of learning areas for the children to explore. One group of children made their own 'car wash' out of crates. They wrote their names on it and made sure that all of the school trikes were scrubbed clean. The children were encouraged by the teacher to talk about what they were learning and the children were able to explain their job to others. In Reception, one child was able to predict that putting too many things on a boat would make it tip over.
- Mathematics is popular with pupils and the school has dedicated times when the basic skills of numeracy and literacy are reinforced in a challenging and competitive way. This has helped pupils to make more progress.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium, including those eligible for free school meals, make good progress, especially the younger ones. It is as good as other pupils in the school and compares favourably with what might be expected nationally. Their attainment is now improving. The funding to support these pupils has targeted younger ones so far, but the up-to-date tracking system is being well used to identify other year groups where more intervention is needed.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs often make better progress than other pupils because of the support they get in class and when they are withdrawn from classes by skilled support assistants and volunteers.
- Most pupils in Year 2 read fluently for their age. They are able to break down words into the sounds that letters make but most were able to read a chosen text without needing to do this. Many older pupils read at home. They could name their favourite author and could name lots of other books written by them.
- The school scored above the national average in a recent test to see how well pupils understand the sounds that letters make.

The quality of teaching is good

- Parents think that teaching is good and they are happy with the progress that their children are making.
- Teaching is good because lessons are designed to cater for the different needs of pupils, which is particularly important in mixed-aged classes. In a Year 4 and 5 mathematics lesson different groups were given different questions, but all were expected to be able to understand how multiplication and questions involving division could be checked. In a small number of lessons the work was not as well matched to the ability of some pupils.
- Pupils achieve well because the curriculum is interesting and teachers use real-life situations when planning lessons. In a lesson for Year 5 and 6, the teacher used a picture of a scuba diver to help the pupils to think of interesting words to describe what was happening.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and adopt good questioning techniques in order to judge how well pupils are doing in lessons by getting them to explain their answers.
- The new marking policy for literacy encourages teachers to give pupils very good guidance on the quality of work they do with advice on how to improve and excellent opportunities for them to reflect and respond to teachers' suggestions and remarks. This quality of marking is not found consistently in pupils' numeracy or topic work.
- Pupils have targets to achieve which they understand, but teachers do not refer to them in day-

to-day marking across the curriculum often enough.

- Teaching assistants make an important contribution to pupils' learning. In the Nursery, language development and children's self-confidence are encouraged by singing simple songs at the same time as making puppets 'fall out of bed'.
- Staff promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development as they demand high standards from the pupils. They use group work to encourage their social development and stress the importance of good behaviour.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of pupils think that behaviour is good. They understand about different forms of bullying and say that 'there is very little here'. Over the past three years there have been very few pupils who have been involved in incidents of poor behaviour. There has been only one racist incident in the past three years.
- In lessons, behaviour and pupils' attitude to their work is often exemplary. There are few incidents of minor misbehaviour and when it does happen it does not interfere with the learning of the majority of pupils.
- At the end of lessons pupils line up when asked in an orderly way. They behave extremely well in assembly and when leaving hold doors open for other pupils, who often say 'thank you'.
- Pupils feel safe in school and they understand the dangers associated with working on computers because the teachers give them good advice on what they should do and what they must avoid. Most parents agree that their children are safe in school in a caring environment.
- The school encourages pupils to take on roles of responsibility such as in the library or the school office. Year 6 pupils read to Key Stage 1 pupils and they often sit with their younger friends at lunchtime. In this small, friendly school, pupils of different ages play happily together at break-time and during their lunch hour. The school has a 'buddy' system so that pupils who have concerns can speak to another pupil about it.
- Attendance is average, but improving, and the number of pupils who are absent for prolonged periods is also reducing. Few are late for school.

The leadership and management are good

- The senior leadership team work well together and, along with a very committed staff, they are keen to improve the school.
- The leadership of teaching and learning are good. Procedures to check the quality of teaching are thorough and senior staff examine pupils' work in order to judge how well they are doing. There is additional support for teachers who need it to help them to improve their teaching. The school plans to share the good and outstanding practice within school to ensure lessons fully challenge all pupils.
- The school has successfully tackled areas for improvement that were identified in the previous report. The staff now carefully track pupil progress and, as a result, those who are underachieving can be identified quickly at frequent pupil progress meetings.
- The headteacher has an accurate view of how well the school is doing. She is a good role model for the pupils and is well respected by staff.
- The school has a clear commitment to, and effective ways for, tackling equality and tackling discrimination. The good progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is an indication of the school's success.
- The curriculum is good and exciting topics such as the study of the Titanic appeal to pupils' curiosity. The school's reward system allows many pupils to visit local theatres to see professional productions, but they also stage their own annual production, which involves every pupil in the school.
- Local and British history is celebrated by pupils in their study of mining, but whilst they have a

good understanding of different religions, there are relatively few opportunities for them to engage first hand with people from other backgrounds.

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet current requirements.
- The local authority has been a key element in school improvement in, for example, giving staff advice and training on how they could track how well pupils are performing.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body understand data and how well the pupils are doing in the school and know about the quality of teaching. They understand extremely well how performance management should reward teachers who perform well by improving pupil progress. They are clear as to how the school funding is used and are aware of the impact of the new laptops on helping pupils to make progress. They are very ambitious for the school and decided to hold their own skills audit in order to better serve the school.

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	114055
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	401405

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	97
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Russell Bell
Headteacher	Lisa Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2009
Telephone number	01388 730283
Fax number	01388 730260
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