

# Diamond Hall Junior School

Well Street, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR4 6JF

**Inspection dates** 12–13 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Over time, pupils have made inconsistent progress across the school because not enough teaching is good.
- Most pupils make the expected progress in their writing but too few make good progress.
- Teachers do not always understand how pupils' writing skills should progress from year to year. They do not always make it clear to pupils how to make their work more successful.
- Teaching varies and teachers often talk for too long. They do not always set work at the right level or check closely on learning during lessons to make adjustments and quicken progress.
- Too many pupils arrive late for school. Attendance is below the national average because too many pupils take holidays during term time.
- Leaders and managers do not check regularly enough on the quality of teaching to ensure that agreed policies are being followed and improvements are being made at a fast enough pace.
- School improvement plans do not include clearly measurable targets that are broken down into small steps. As a result, leaders and governors do not know quickly enough if new initiatives are working. This slows down the impact of initiatives on raising the quality of teaching and achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of what makes teaching effective.
- Actions to raise standards are resulting in better achievement in mathematics across the school.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for pupil premium make good progress because of the good quality support they receive.
- Pupils enjoy the provision of a wide range of visits and visitors as well as musical opportunities in school.
- Pupils feel safe. They understand the different forms bullying may take, including those relating to prejudice.
- Pupils from different backgrounds and cultures generally get along well because the school works hard to develop their acceptance of others.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons delivered by 12 different teachers. Four were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. A number of short visits were also made to reading sessions and to groups of pupils who were receiving additional support outside of their classroom.
- Inspectors listened to a number of pupils read, observed pupils in lessons, around school and during play and together with the deputy and assistant headteacher, looked at pupils' work from all year groups.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the headteacher, school leaders, including those with responsibility for English and mathematics and a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. A discussion was also held with a representative from the local authority and an external adviser who is currently working with the school.
- The inspectors took account of the nine responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) that were submitted during the course of the inspection. They also spoke to groups of parents at the beginning of the school day and took account of feedback from 27 staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation including the school's own records of pupils' learning and progress, the checks made on the quality of teaching and performance of staff and those relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Lee Owston, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Diane Coleman

Additional Inspector

Belita Scott

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Diamond Hall Juniors is larger than the average sized school.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children looked after by the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the children of members of the armed forces) is well above average at over double the national figure.
- An above average proportion of pupils come from other minority ethnic groups. These pupils are often at the very earliest stages of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is lower than that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above the national figure.
- The school is currently working towards becoming a UNICEF Rights Respecting School.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- A number of new teachers have joined the school since the time of the last inspection. This represents approximately half of the teaching staff. A new assistant headteacher was appointed in September 2012.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
  - ensuring that activities are set at the correct level for all pupils, especially for the more-able
  - making sure that pupils do not spend too long listening unnecessarily to their teacher so that learning moves at a brisk pace
  - checking pupils' understanding more frequently during lessons so that activities can be adapted, if necessary, to ensure faster progress.
- Improve pupils' rates of progress in writing so that attainment rises more quickly by:
  - developing teachers' subject knowledge of how pupils' writing skills develop
  - giving pupils examples of what good or better writing looks like so that they know what to include to make their work more successful
  - ensuring more consistent opportunities for pupils to write for different reasons.
- Raise attendance to at least average levels and ensure that pupils arrive at school on time each day by working more closely with parents, particularly to reduce term-time holidays.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of the school by:
  - ensuring that plans for improvement include clear measures of success that are broken down into steps across the year so that all leaders, including the governing body, know if new initiatives are having a positive impact on outcomes
  - checking on the quality of teaching more frequently to ensure that all staff are consistently following agreed school policies and improvement is happening at a fast enough rate.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils make inconsistent progress because not enough teaching is good. Although there are signs of improvement, overall achievement requires improvement.
- Pupils arrive at the school in Year 3 with standards that are below average. They typically start with skills and abilities approximately one term behind pupils nationally.
- Improvements in mathematics have been effective and many pupils now make good progress from their starting points. Regular, additional work to boost pupils' performance in Years 5 and 6 and effective leadership of a specialist mathematics teacher have ensured that in 2012, attainment in mathematics rose to be broadly in line with the national average.
- Progress for many is good in reading but the progress of the more-able pupils requires improvement and not enough of these pupils reach the higher levels.
- Improvement in writing has not been as successful and attainment is not as high and progress is not fast enough. While pupils are motivated to write because they are increasingly given more imaginative tasks their basic skills are not yet fully secure. Tasks are not always hard enough and some could make more progress.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups, including those learning English as an additional language, make progress similar to that of their classmates. While the quality of support they receive outside of their classroom is often good, the work they receive in class is not always matched effectively enough to their own level for them to make quicker progress.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to target this group. This group includes a large number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Good quality support programmes are delivered by skilled teaching assistants so that these pupils make good progress and catch up with their classmates. By the end of Year 6, there is little difference between the standards pupils eligible for free school meals reach and those of other learners.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not been good enough to ensure that most pupils make good progress. The high turnover of staff has made it difficult to build on improvements to teaching. Staffing is now more stable and although overall teaching requires improvement, it is starting to get better.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not always use their knowledge of pupils' ability to provide activities at the correct level. As a result, pupils often find their work too easy or too hard and more-able pupils regularly sit through explanations of learning that they have already mastered.
- Typically, teachers talk for too long and do not involve pupils enough in lessons. This slows the pace of learning. During these times, a few pupils become bored and distracted which results in restlessness and chattering. Teachers do not always address this behaviour in a consistent manner to enable pupils to regain interest in their work.
- In the best lessons, pupils make good progress because teachers know precisely what they want different groups to learn. They check regularly on pupils' progress and adjust learning if required to ensure good progress. For example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson pupils were imaginatively engaged in a game using their knowledge of adjectives to describe a familiar character to classmates. Careful adjustment by the teacher of the vocabulary used, based on the responses of pupils, ensured good progress.
- The teaching of reading and mathematics is improving especially in Years 3 and 4. A stronger approach to teaching letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is allowing pupils to develop their confidence as readers quickly and make good progress. A new initiative in mathematics to ensure lower-ability pupils develop mathematical concepts by using practical resources is

improving their grasp of number concepts.

- The teaching of writing requires improvement because teachers are not secure in their subject knowledge to ensure that the essential skills of writing are taught progressively. Pupils do not see enough examples of good quality writing for them to know what successful work looks like.
- Pupils receive regular feedback on their learning. They know where they have been successful and where further improvement is needed. The school has an agreed policy for pupils to respond to these comments but a few teachers do not follow this. Leaders have not checked teachers' work regularly enough to quickly address this issue.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### requires improvement

- Although most pupils have good attitudes to their learning, this is marred by a significant minority of pupils who arrive late and fail to attend regularly. Attendance, although rising, remains below the national average. The school has recently employed an attendance officer to work more closely with parents of persistently absent pupils. This is at too early a stage for the impact on attendance to be measured.
- Typically, pupils are welcoming, polite and show kindness towards each other. They generally have a good sense of right and wrong and understand that people have different views and beliefs. Across the school, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively so that all pupils get on well together.
- Pupils feel safe in school, know the risks to which they may be exposed and how to minimise them, especially those related to mobile phones and the Internet. Parents agree that their children are looked after well.
- Pupils are clear about bullying, including that relating to different forms of prejudice. From the few instances they can recall, pupils know that all adults within the school resolve any issues quickly and effectively.
- Pupils are typically well-behaved around the school and during playtimes. When the pace of learning slows and they are not fully involved in their learning, some pupils become bored and disengage. Not all teachers manage this behaviour consistently to enable pupils to regain interest quickly and make progress.
- Pupils have good skills of co-operation, collaboration and independence. This is because pupils are given regular opportunities to take responsibility, such as through the school council, and to develop their team work skills. The school is currently undertaking the UNICEF Rights Respecting School programme to promote the values of acceptance, tolerance and respect amongst pupils further.

### The leadership and management

### requires improvement

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have managed significant staffing turbulence since the last inspection. More stable staffing and a recent appointment of an assistant headteacher are accelerating improvement in teaching. These changes show the school's ability to improve although other aspects of management require improvement.
- School systems to track the progress of pupils allow senior leaders to identify areas for improvement. Priorities are set out in clear action plans but there is a lack of precision in how success is to be measured. This omission of clear, achievable steps across the year means leaders and governors do not always know if new initiatives are working and when to intervene to accelerate progress.
- Senior leaders clearly understand what makes good or better teaching. However, checks on the quality of teaching are not regular enough to identify where teachers are not following agreed school policy. This has led to inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' progress that have not been addressed at a quick enough rate.
- Teachers have targets based on their performance and they are now held to account for the

progress pupils make in their class. Decisions about pay awards are based on the progress made by pupils. Where necessary, the headteacher has tackled underperformance of staff through additional training and coaching to improve practice.

- The curriculum has strengths in the range of visits and visitors and opportunities for pupils to develop their musical talents. Pupils' writing skills are not developed as strongly and while some teachers provide regular chances to use skills for a range of different reasons across subjects, this is not consistent across the school.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Pupils from different cultures and backgrounds work and play together well. Gaps between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other learners have narrowed through good use of targeted money.
- The local authority supports the school through regular reviews of the school's performance. The school has additional support for mathematics, and more recently for school improvement overall through an external adviser.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are experienced and offer a range of professional expertise to support the school. They review data about pupils' achievement and use this information to challenge the school to make more rapid improvements. Although governors do not have a clear picture about the current quality of teaching they do understand the allocation of pay rises linked to good teaching. They tackle underperformance through individual support plans. They are not clear about the impact of new initiatives on outcomes because school improvement plans do not indicate what level of success is expected at regular intervals throughout the year.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	108759
<b>Local authority</b>	Sunderland
<b>Inspection number</b>	405194

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	325
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Snaith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kim Bennett
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 553 7630
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