

Cotherstone Primary School

Cotherstone, Barnard Castle, County Durham, DL12 9QB

Inspection dates

12 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Excellent leadership by the headteacher, who is well supported by the deputy headteacher and governors, has ensured that the school has improved very well since the previous inspection. Pupils' progress, the standards they reach and the quality of teaching have all improved well.
- Pupils make excellent progress from starting points which are broadly typical for their age when they start in the Reception class. By the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards which are well above the national average in reading, writing and in mathematics.
- Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully by the headteacher to ensure that all pupils are set challenging, attainable targets. She recognises that a reduction in the amount of adult support for pupils with special educational needs has created a need for more and better-adapted learning resources to ensure these pupils continue to make the same progress as their peers.
- Teaching is outstanding because teachers know their pupils well and plan carefully to meet the needs of all in the mixed-age classes. Teachers set challenging work, which motivates pupils to do their best.
- Pupils say they feel completely safe at school. Their behaviour is excellent. Good cooperation between pupils makes a strong contribution to their rapid rate of learning. Outside of lessons pupils play well together, with older pupils making sure that younger children are looked after and no one is left out.
- Children in the Reception class get off to a very good start. They settle quickly into routines and follow the excellent example set by Year 1 children. They soon become confident learners, well able to direct their own learning and work at a good pace.
- A creative curriculum provides many exciting and memorable experiences which fire pupils' enthusiasm for learning. The school involves parents very well in their children's learning and creates many opportunities for them to join in the life of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed eight lessons or parts of lessons, and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, staff, the Chair of the Governing body, parents and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books, data relating to their progress since the start of the school year, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- Inspectors took account of 18 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, and six responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michelle Crichton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, those from armed services families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- All pupils are White British and none speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- An above average proportion of children join or leave the school partway through their education as families move in and out of the area.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection there was a temporary change in the leadership of the school, owing to the absence of the headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils with special educational needs continue to make the same progress as other pupils by providing learning resources and activities that are specially adapted to meet their needs, which help them to work on their own and to make the small steps needed in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children make rapid progress in the Reception class. By the end of the Reception Year nearly all reach the expected level for their age and each year a good proportion exceed this. They benefit much from working alongside Year 1 pupils, who are happy to involve them in their play and investigations. For example, a group worked very well together to construct a snake as part of their work on Chinese New Year. Year 1 pupils took the lead in deciding that since they had built such a big snake they should go a step further and measure how long it was! Such collaborative learning prepares Reception children exceptionally well for work in Year 1.
- Excellent progress continues as pupils move from class to class. Pupils in Year 2 and 3 make rapid gains in mathematical and literacy skills. By the end of Year 2, usually every pupil reaches the level expected for their age, and some exceed it. Pupils' reading is a particular strength because early reading skills are well taught and then consolidated through frequent reading in school and at home.
- Year 6 test results are consistently above average in mathematics and English. Pupils' performance in reading and mathematics are particularly high. In the 2012 tests, two out of eight pupils achieved Level 6 in mathematics, which is an extremely high level for 11-year-olds. The proportion reaching the higher Level 5 was well above the national average for reading, writing and mathematics. This represented excellent progress from pupils' individual starting points.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported by teachers' effective planning to make good progress. Occasionally, it is not as rapid as that of others because the school no longer provides regular additional adult support for those with specific needs or catch up work. Budget constraints in the last year resulted in some reductions to staffing.
- Pupil-premium funds are well used to ensure that pupils who are eligible for free school meals achieve as well as other pupils. School data show that these pupils make equally good progress and often attain higher standards than expected from their starting points. Funds are used to give access to extracurricular activities and visits and to provide additional resources when they are needed.
- Those pupils who join the school part way through their education are made very welcome and quickly settle into the school routines. They are well supported to make friends and to learn as well as others, so that they achieve well during their time in school.
- Pupils make excellent progress over time. Work in their books from the start of the school year, and the school's tracking data confirm this judgement. All books show a good volume of work and much individual research and personal writing. It is clear that pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and are keen to do well.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding. School tracking data and work in pupils' books confirm that this is the case over time.
- Excellent progress begins with learning that excites and interests pupils. From the earliest age teachers encourage pupils to find things out for themselves and to follow areas of interest in the topics they study.
- From the earliest years children use computers by themselves as they pursue their own lines of enquiry. Children in Class 1 had a lovely morning finding out about Chinese New Year and helped their families to find out too!
- Exceptionally good learning in mathematics is based on teachers' good subject knowledge, very good understanding of what pupils need to learn next and careful planning of a variety of work to match the wide range of needs in the mixed-age classes. Pupils in the Year 2/3 class made

excellent progress in their understanding of multiplying by 10, because of the teacher's crystal-clear explanations and demonstration, and because the range of tasks provided allowed each pupil to work at their own best rate.

- Literacy skills are very well promoted, beginning in the Reception class where children rapidly learn to recognise letters and the sounds they make. They quickly develop a real excitement for this learning because teaching actively involves them and sets challenging problems for them to solve. For example, a group of children had great fun sounding out and writing words that contained the 'ir' sound.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort and expect them to produce good-quality work that is distinctly their own work, so that their individual strengths show through. . Examples seen in the work of older pupils show how much care they take with their writing. This is clear from the both the quality and volume of their output and in the attention they give to striking just the right tone in their writing. By the end of Year 6 there are some very polished 'authors' who know just how to create a 'good read'.
- Teachers' marking is meticulous and gives pupils good advice on how to improve. While most pupils follow these suggestions promptly and improve aspects of their work, on a few occasions this advice is not followed up, so pupils' improvement slows.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They are resilient, take pride in their work and will keep trying even if at first they find the work difficult. Pupils are kind and considerate to each other, staff and visitors.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using the internet. They know about different types of bullying and how to respond to it. They have very good relationships with teachers who they trust to support them if they have a problem. Records show that there are few incidents of poor behaviour, and that these are usually dealt with quickly and effectively.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities for helping the school to run smoothly and caring for younger children in the playground. They feel they have a say in the school's development and that their ideas are listened to. They are keen fundraisers and are particularly proud of their contributions to the animal sanctuary they support.
- Attendance is above average, reflecting pupils' high enjoyment of school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's ambitious vision and determination have seen the school improve significantly since the previous inspection. She has been well supported by the deputy headteacher in improving the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the achievement of pupils.
- School leaders and governors are extremely clear about the school's strengths and where further improvement is needed. The school's work is checked regularly and accurately; prompt action is taken when weaknesses are discovered.
- The performance of staff is extremely well managed. Staff have clear targets linked to pupils' progress and for improving the quality of their own work and are held to account for these through systems for salary progression.
- Pupils' progress is checked very carefully so any pupil at risk of underachievement is spotted very quickly and supported to overcome obstacles to their good progress. All pupils have equal opportunities to succeed.
- There are a few occasions when pupils who have special educational needs do not make the same good progress as others and senior leaders are exploring how better learning resources can be used to overcome the recent reduction of adult support. Pupils for whom the pupil premium is intended have equal access to all learning opportunities, so make the same

excellent progress as other pupils.

- The excellent curriculum provides rich experiences and diverse activities from which pupils learn. It is designed to stimulate their curiosity and provide frequent opportunities to develop a vast range of skills. All activities are underpinned by very good opportunities to use and practise their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across subjects. Pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is rooted in the varied and memorable activities they enjoy within and beyond the school day.
- The local authority provided strong support for the school during the headteacher's unavoidable absence. It now provides light touch support.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors are well informed about the school's performance, the quality of teaching, the management of staff performance and how staff are rewarded. They are closely involved in making checks on the work of the school and bring a wide range of expertise to its service. Finances are very well managed and governors hold the school to account for how pupil-premium funds are spent. Governors ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. The governing body regularly audits its skills and competences to ensure that it is well placed to both challenge and support the school. Governors have been appropriately trained in data analysis, managing the headteacher's performance and in financial procedures.

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	114020
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	403218

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 of pupils on the school roll	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Ayre
Headteacher	Rebecca Jellis
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2008
Telephone number	01833 650491
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