

Witton-le-Wear Primary School

St James Gardens, Witton-le-Wear, Bishop Aukland, DL14 0BG

Inspection dates 25–26 April 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.

- Achievement is outstanding. Pupils in this small village school make excellent progress across all key stages. This is because senior leaders have continued to improve on the good levels of achievement identified in the last inspection.
- Children who start in the Reception class come from a range of different nurseries and other settings, including a number for whom Reception is their first experience of education. Although the majority of children arrive with levels of skills and understanding in line with those expected nationally, for a significant number levels are lower, particularly in communication.
- By the end of Year 6, the vast majority of pupils leave with standards above those expected nationally in both English and mathematics. This represents outstanding achievement for pupils in all groups.
- Teaching is of an outstanding quality across the school. Teachers are exceptionally good at identifying the needs of all pupils and are very effective at ensuring work set closely matches individual pupils' needs. However, in a very small number of lessons marking and feedback does not give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent both inside and outside the classroom. Without exception they are polite and caring towards each other, staff and visitors. They all feel that school is a safe and very happy place to which they enjoy coming to learn. This is reflected in their very good levels of attendance and their exceptional attitudes to learning in lessons.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher supported by the small staff team and governing body have brought about much improvement since the last inspection. For example, pupils' standards of attainment in mathematics and English have improved since the last inspection, as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching. Leaders' continued commitment to bettering pupils' levels of achievement shows their ability to make the school even better in the future.
- Although systems to monitor the performance of staff are currently in place for teachers, senior leaders have yet to provide similar levels of monitoring for non-teaching staff.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 12 lessons and parts of lessons taught by four teachers. Joint lesson observations were undertaken with the headteacher. The inspector also listened to pupils read from Years 1 and 6 and examined the quality of work in the books of pupils from across the school.
- The inspector held meetings and had discussions with pupils, senior leaders, members of the school staff, and the Chair of the Governing Body as well as a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector had informal discussions with seven parents at an event held at the school for current parents. The inspector also took into account the views of 27 parents who made their views known through the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector also took into account the wholly positive responses from the 13 members of staff who made their views known to the inspector.
- The inspector studied health and safety documentation, teachers' curriculum planning, documents relating to the procedures to check the performance of staff and the school's system for checking pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Witton-le-Wear Primary school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a very small number from other minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A smaller than average proportion of pupils is eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from forces' families).
- There are a broadly average number of pupils with special educational needs who are supported through school action.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly higher than the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standards set by the government for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Because of the small size of the school, pupils are often educated in mixed-age classes.
- There is a before- and after-school club which is managed by the school governors.
- The school has recently received a number of awards and accreditations including a Healthy Schools award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in a small number of lessons by ensuring marking of pupils' books consistently gives sufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.
- Ensure all support staff have their performance evaluated on a more regular basis and that this evaluation contributes to school improvement

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The majority of pupils start school with skills and knowledge that are in line with those typically expected for their age. A small number start with slightly lower standards. The vast majority normally end Year 6 with attainment that is well above that expected nationally in both English and mathematics. This represents outstanding achievement overall.
- However, last year attainment dipped slightly, although still remaining above national averages. This was because of the very small numbers of pupils in the year group of whom more than one third had identified special educational needs.
- Current Year 6 pupils are making exceptional progress and are on track to make a significant improvement on last year's national test results.
- Most children who join the Reception and Year 1 mixed-age class arrive with social, language and numeracy development in line with those expected for their age. A smaller number have knowledge and skills a little below this. Because of the exceptionally good levels of staff teamwork and the very wide range of interesting and engaging activities provided, children make excellent progress and leave Reception class with skills and knowledge above those expected nationally. This very good start is clearly recognised by parents, one of whom commented, 'My child has just blossomed in so many ways since starting in Reception and is now a very confident and happy learner who loves coming to school.'
- Pupils also make excellent progress in English and mathematics in Key Stage 1. This is because teaching is excellent. Many more Year 1 pupils than the national average achieved the expected performance in the phonics screening check (which tests pupils' ability to link letters to sounds), and of those that did not, all have now reached the expected standard.
- Pupils throughout the school clearly enjoy reading. Reading records show that younger pupils read regularly to family members at home and to staff in school. Older pupils also read a wide and varied choice of books. All pupils spoken to said how much reading books at school had helped them to develop their reading skills. As one commented, 'I prefer reading a book to playing on my games console because books take me into another world.'
- A much smaller than average number of pupils who attend the school are known to be eligible for free school meals. In the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2012, this group attained standards above those expected nationally by approximately two terms. Attainment for this group was slightly lower than their peers; however, as more than 50% of this group also had identified special educational needs, this represented excellent progress overall. Current tracking information shows attainment for this group is continuing to rise in line with others in the year group.
- The very good attainment of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is because school leaders have been exceptionally effective in their use of pupil-premium monies to support pupils. For example, the school identified the needs of a small group of individual pupils and has put in place a range of extra support. This support includes one-to-one teaching and individual learning programmes during daily assembly times. This has accelerated pupils' progress, particularly in reading and writing.
- The vast majority of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress across the curriculum. This is because staff are exceptionally good at identifying pupils' extra needs and use a wide range of different strategies to support these pupils.
- Parents spoken to feel that the school values all of its pupils equally. They regard all staff as highly approachable and supportive and the small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups also make exceptional progress.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The progress in a range of pupils' books and in lessons observed during the inspection

confirmed that the quality of teaching across the school is outstanding.

- Pupils commented on how learning in school is fun. This is because teaching staff are exceptionally skilled at planning exciting opportunities for pupils to learn in a variety of different ways. They also offer pupils a wide range of diverse experiences, for example, through trips to a local nature reserve to study animal and plant habitats, participation in Durham Cathedral's music project as well as through growing their own food on the school's allotment.
- As a result of these diverse opportunities, pupils are given many opportunities to write from first-hand experiences and practise their writing skills. As a consequence, attainment in writing has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The majority of classes in the school have pupils of different ages as well as with a wide range of abilities. Teaching staff are exceptionally good at using information about how well pupils are doing to plan lessons and, as a result, the curriculum in all lessons meets the needs of all pupils exceptionally well.
- Children in the Reception classes benefit from a wide range of activities both in the outdoor area and in the classroom, and from teaching which is both lively and interesting. For example, at the time of the inspection, part of one of the classrooms was converted into an airport, complete with large plane and passport control. Children took great delight in designing their own passports and ensuring everyone was wearing a seatbelt during role play on the plane, activities which promoted their speaking, listening and writing skills as well as their imaginations exceptionally well.
- Staff work exceptionally closely together to support the learning needs of all pupils. Strong working partnerships between teachers and support staff are evident across the school. This leads to excellent quality provision for all pupils and particularly for those with disabilities and special educational needs, whose additional needs are very well supported in classrooms. As a result all groups make outstanding progress.
- Teachers diligently mark pupils' work and always provide feedback to pupils on the quality of their work. However, on a small number of occasions, marking does not give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is excellent both inside and outside the classroom. Learning is almost never interrupted by incidents of difficult behaviour and no incidents of bad behaviour have been logged in the school's incident file for two years. Pupils say the school is a very safe and happy place.
- Parents echo this view and feel that school is an exceptionally harmonious and welcoming place to which their children enjoy coming. They also describe staff as always, 'going the extra mile' to care for and support their children.
- Pupils say they love coming to school and feel valued as members of the school community. Those spoken to during the inspection could offer no way in which they felt school could be improved because they felt their views were already valued, respected and taken into account by school leaders.
- Older pupils escort younger pupils to and from assembly, modelling good behaviour and ensuring they take care when crossing the playground. This caring philosophy enables older pupils to develop responsible and mature attitudes which prepare them well for their transfer to secondary school.
- Pupils spoken to were very clear about how to stay safe as well as the different forms bullying can take. They feel this is due to the reminders on display in school of what constitutes bullying behaviour and also through the excellent quality of advice and guidance given by staff through the recent whole-school internet safety day.
- Attendance has continued to improve since the last inspection and is above average in comparison to other primary schools. This is largely due to the consistent approach taken by all

staff and the importance given to attendance and punctuality in school. Despite the school's highly diligent and rigorous approach, a small number of parents continue to reduce their children's attendance at school by taking holidays during term time.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a very clear vision of how to make the school successful. Supported by the small but highly effective teaching team and the governing body, school leaders have continued to maintain and build upon the school's performance since the previous inspection. As a result the school's overall effectiveness has moved from good to outstanding.
- Senior leaders frequently and robustly monitor teaching across the school and are highly effective in taking action through the management of staff performance to improve any areas of weakness. As a result the quality of teaching has improved from good to outstanding since the last inspection.
- School leaders ensure performance targets for teaching staff link directly to pupils' achievement and targets within the school-development plan. Checks on the performance of staff are undertaken rigorously and the headteacher uses this information to make decisions on teachers' pay. However, the performance of staff other than teachers is not always consistently linked to school development and improvement.
- The curriculum is outstanding and offers pupils a wide and rich variety of opportunities and experiences. A recent residential visit undertaken by Year 5 and 6 pupils to an outward bound centre was described by one pupil as, 'The best time I have ever had because I was both scared and excited at the same time particularly when raft building in the 'piranha pool'.' The breadth of these experiences develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding exceptionally well.
- The local authority has a high regard for the abilities of the school's leadership team and has, since the last inspection, offered a 'light touch' support to the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - School governors come from a diverse range of backgrounds and bring a broad range of relevant skills and experience to the governing body which enables them to offer an excellent level of support and challenge to school leaders. Their continuous commitment to training, coupled with the previous experience of the chair of governors, ensures they have a very good understanding of pupils' performance data and achievement. They have developed, in partnership with school leaders, an effective system for checking the performance of teachers which rewards good teaching and addresses underperformance. Their very careful and measured approach to the management of pupil-premium funding has enabled them to give valuable support to pupils eligible and increase levels of attainment and progress. Safeguarding procedures and policies within school are undertaken to a very high standard. The health and safety committee carries out regular inspections and has ensured that safeguarding procedures meet current requirements.

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	114067
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	403222

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	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Dingle
Headteacher	Mark Stephenson
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2007
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