

Norton Primary School

Berkshire Road, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees, TS20 2RD

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The quality of teaching over time has been too variable. As a result, pupils have not made enough progress for achievement to be good overall.
- Pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to respond to teachers' marking in order to help them improve their work and deepen their learning.
- Teachers' use of questioning does not always provide opportunities for pupils to be stretched and challenged to extend their understanding.
- Pupils are not consistently challenged to produce work of the highest standards.
- The extensive range of additional adult support available in the school is not always deployed and utilised to best effect.
- Senior leaders have not yet had time to ensure that all staff have benefited from opportunities to learn from the very best practice in the school and beyond, or to fully review the recent initiatives implemented to support the raising of standards.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use and apply their English and mathematical skills in other subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders, including governors, have successfully ensured a focus on improving the quality of teaching. The school's checks on how well it is doing are very accurate. Consequently, pupils' progress is accelerating.
- Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are good, as are their attitudes to learning. On occasion, these are exemplary.
- The school provides an interesting curriculum. Pupils benefit from a range of exciting activities that stimulate learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons and other part lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and carried out a thorough examination of their written work in their books.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their experiences in school and listened to groups of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff with particular responsibilities, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- A variety of school documentation was examined, including the school's own information about the progress of current pupils, the school's checks on how well it is doing and improvement plans, behaviour and attendance logs and records relating to the management of staff performance.
- Inspectors took account of a questionnaire completed by nine staff, together with 11 responses submitted by parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also took account of three letters from parents and the results of the school's own survey of parental views.

Inspection team

Alan Sergison, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christopher Jeffrey Young

Additional Inspector

Anne Firth

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Just over half of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children known to be eligible for free school meals, children in local authority care and pupils from service families.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The majority of pupils are from White British background.
- The school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has made links with another local primary school to share practice, especially the quality of teaching.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils.
- The school has achieved a number of awards including the Healthy School Award, Eco School Award, International School Award and the Commitment to the Rights Respecting School Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement through consistently good or better teaching by:
 - ensuring that the quality of all teachers' marking is as good as the best examples seen so that pupils are supported to improve their work and deepen their understanding
 - developing the questioning skills of teachers to ensure that in all lessons, pupils' learning is challenged, probed and extended
 - ensuring that all teachers consistently challenge all pupils to produce work of the highest standards
 - developing the skills and ensuring the effective deployment of, the range of additional adult support for teaching, so that it is all as good as the very best practice observed
 - providing further training opportunities so that teachers develop their skills in using a range of different teaching and learning strategies so that they can learn from the best practice in the school and beyond.
- Raise standards achieved in basic skills by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to use and apply their basic skills in literacy and numeracy consistently across all subjects
 - ensuring all leaders monitor and evaluate the impact of the relatively recently introduced initiatives to raise standards.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils have consistently made good progress throughout the school. However, school data on the current progress of pupils and other inspection evidence confirm that rates of progress are beginning to accelerate. However, for too many pupils gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding remain.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 is close to the national average. While results in the 2012 national phonics check were below average, the introduction of a structured programme that supports the teaching of phonics has resulted in pupils' progress in this area accelerating rapidly.
- Progress over time has been too variable and pupils have not made consistently good increases in their knowledge and understanding in English and mathematics. This has resulted in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards being below national averages at the end of Year 6. However, the school is addressing this variation. The proportion of pupils making and exceeding the expected progress in 2013 is predicted to compare favourably with the national picture. Lesson observations, hearing pupils read and scrutiny of work confirm this judgement.
- Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to practise and develop their numeracy and literacy skills in meaningful contexts in a range of subjects, however. Consequently, they are not as good at applying their basic skills as they should be.
- Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are below those usually found for their age. As the result of good teaching, however, they make good progress over time. They begin to learn how to blend letters and sounds through a phonics programme that helps them to read. They are well prepared for the next stage in their learning as they enter Year 1.
- Careful tracking and recording of pupils' progress helps the school to quickly identify and provide support for pupils at risk of falling behind.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs now make progress in line with their peers as a result of the appropriate support that they receive.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium are now making better progress. In 2012, the gap in their performance compared to that of their peers was around one term behind in English and around three terms behind in mathematics. However, current school data and other inspection evidence confirm that this gap is closing rapidly and in some year groups it has been eliminated.
- Reading is taught well which means that pupils acquire the skills they need to read new words and develop a love of reading. They are able to reflect on the work of a range of authors and to express a view which ones they prefer and why.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time has been too variable between classes and requires improvement. There are examples of good and outstanding practice in the school now, but this has not yet been fully shared effectively to enable all pupils to make consistently good progress.
- The headteacher, supported by other senior leaders, has provided a strong and ongoing drive to improve the quality of teaching. This has undoubtedly led to the recent improvements and the increasing proportion of teaching that is now at least good.
- Where teaching and planning are at their very best, the impact on pupils' engagement and progress is evident. Year 6 pupils made rapid progress in literacy lessons designed to support them to write a persuasive letter of complaint relating to the quality of packets of sweets. They worked with great enthusiasm to complete the task. Sharp teacher questioning ensured a good pace to the lessons and probed and extended learning.
- Not all lessons are as successful as this, however. The questioning is on occasion not as focused and the pace of the lesson and subsequently the learning then slows. On occasion, pupils'

attention then wanes too.

- The quality of marking of pupils' books is also variable. In the best examples seen, pupils receive clear feedback on what to do to improve and are given the opportunity to respond to this. However, this was not always the case and opportunities are missed to support pupils. Similarly, not all teachers have the highest expectations of the quality of work produced by pupils and this slows the pace of learning.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a good balance of adult-led activities and those chosen by the children. Language is developed through play. Pupils clearly feel happy and safe in this environment and enthusiastically share their learning with adults.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are beginning to thrive as a result of good teaching. In the best examples, this is characterised by appropriate teaching strategies, a supportive classroom atmosphere and effective partnerships between teachers and teaching assistants. There was some variability in the effectiveness of some of these partnerships, however.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in and around school is good. They are proud of their school and have good and on occasion exemplary attitudes to learning. They are polite, friendly and hardworking.
- Pupils stated that they feel safe and happy in school. They have a clear view of what constitutes bullying, including cyber-bullying, and are confident that there are several adults who would support them if needed.
- They know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations and relish the opportunity to take responsibility, for example as playground friends.
- Pupils speak warmly of the staff. One pupil stated, 'I like coming to this school because pupils work hard, staff are enthusiastic and help you to improve your work and achieve your potential.'
- The school has worked hard and with success to improve attendance. This is now average.
- Staff, parents and pupils agree that behaviour is usually good. Attention only wanes occasionally in less successful lessons.
- Parents are overwhelming in their support of the school and speak highly of its work. As one parent stated, 'Our children enjoy school and this is thanks to the hard work of the dedicated staff...'
- The school provides a breakfast club which is a good start to the day for pupils who attend.
- The school provides sensitive support for pupils and families whose circumstances might make them vulnerable. Staff work effectively with external agencies to ensure these families receive all the help they need.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership has been strengthened since the time of the previous inspection. There is a clear focus from all leaders on continuous school improvement and a number of recent initiatives have begun to show signs of securing improvements. For example, the quality of teaching has improved. However, many of these initiatives have not yet had enough time to have had a sustained impact on raising standards.
- Staffing changes in the school have led to uneven pupil progress but these challenges have been addressed by the headteacher who has led the school decisively, supported by the school's governors.
- The school benefits from a range of additional adult support. Not all of this support is always used to maximum impact, however. Senior leaders are aware of the need to eradicate this variability to ensure full value for money.

- Senior leaders, some of whom are new to role, have raised expectations of most staff and there is a strong focus on where further improvements are needed so that the school can become good. Ambition is evident and regular monitoring activities provide a clear picture of what is going well.
 - Teachers are benefiting from a partnership link with another school. Visits there have enhanced teachers' understanding of what constitutes effective learning. As a result of this and other quality training and development opportunities, teachers are more aware of the impact of their work on pupils' progress. They are also aware of the need for them to prove that their teaching is making a difference and that they are reaching their performance management objectives. These activities demonstrate the school's commitment to equality and in tackling discrimination and pupils' underachievement. Senior leaders are aware of the need to continue these links so that all staff can benefit fully from the experience.
 - Pupil premium funding is making a difference to the progress made by pupils in both English and mathematics and consequently they are catching up to other pupils. This is because of the additional help and support that these pupils receive.
 - Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They benefit from a broad and varied curriculum. There is a variety of visits out of school which are enjoyed by pupils and they talk enthusiastically about visitors to school, for example through the link to the explorer climbing Mount Everest.
 - The school's checks on how well it is doing are very accurate and lead to a well-written and detailed school improvement plan that rightly focuses on raising pupils' achievement. As a result, several well-chosen improvement strategies have been put in place. It is as yet too early to judge the full impact of these, however.
 - In the recent past, the local authority has provided effective and well-targeted support to the school to support its drive to raise standards and accelerate pupil progress.
 - Statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has been improved since the previous inspection. A number of governors are new to role and they have worked closely as a body to support and challenge senior leaders to move the school forward and to keep up to date with developments. They keep up to date and have an accurate view of how the school is performing and how this compares to all schools, and their understanding of the effectiveness of the school is accurate. They have taken difficult decisions when necessary. They are now more active in the school and are developing their involvement through, for example, governor links to subject areas and short visits to classrooms. They hold senior staff to account through reports to the full governing body. They are aware of how pupil premium is being used and the impact that this is having for pupils. They are also aware of the link between salary and staff performance.
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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	111623
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	401193

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	431
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Griksaitis
Headteacher	Susan Dawson
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2010
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