

Firthmoor Primary School

Ingleby Moor Crescent, Darlington, County Durham, DL1 4RW

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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 headteacher provides purposeful and clear leadership. She is well supported by an effective senior leadership team and good governing body. As a result, teaching and pupils' achievement are good and the school is well placed to improve further.
- Pupils of all abilities, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout school in reading, writing, mathematics and many other subjects.
- Children make a good start to learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The building blocks for reading and writing are well established.
- The quality of teaching is good. It is sometimes outstanding. Lessons are well planned and often inspiring.
- The commitment and effective deployment of teaching assistants and other adults make a good contribution to pupils' learning and progress.
- Pupils are well behaved and feel safe. They take a pride in caring for each other and helping to make the school a good place to be.
- Imaginative themes and a wide range of clubs and activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While teaching is at least good, it is not always of the highest quality to make sure pupils' achievement is outstanding overall.
- Teachers do not consistently develop pupils' independent learning skills.
- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils act on guidance they receive through marking and feedback in order to improve their own work.
- Teachers do not pursue every opportunity for pupils to articulate their thoughts and ideas in order to develop speaking and thinking skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 lessons including two joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. The inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to classrooms.
- Discussions were held with a group of pupils, the Chair, and other members of the Governing Body and members of staff including senior leaders and other leaders with particular responsibilities. Inspectors also heard pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6.
- Inspectors took account of 12 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the outcomes from the school's consultations with parents.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including data on pupils' current progress, the academy development plan, performance management documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Andrew Clark, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Karen Holmes

Additional Inspector

John Pattinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British families.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and receive the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Firthmoor Primary converted to become an academy on 1 May 2012. When its predecessor school, also known as Firthmoor Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed to their posts after the predecessor school was last inspected.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' achievement through increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - developing pupils' independent learning skills
 - making full use of marking and feedback to ensure pupils improve and manage their own work
 - encourage pupils to articulate their thoughts and ideas in order to deepen their thinking and speaking skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with skills and understanding which are generally well below those typically expected for their age. They increasingly make at least good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. Children concentrate well and are increasingly inquisitive and keen to learn. Their early reading and writing skills are particularly well developed and used well in a range of activities.
- Pupils make good progress through the school. As a result, standards of English and mathematics are at expected levels for the current Year 6. There is a strong trend of improvement and an increasing proportion of pupils of all ages and abilities are making better than expected progress throughout the school. As a result, standards are higher by Year 2 and Year 6 than those reflected in national tests and assessment in 2012 which were below average overall.
- The high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and supported by pupil premium funding make good progress. There is little significant difference between the standards reached by pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are not. They are about a term below expected levels overall. The use of the funding to provide carefully targeted one-to-one support is rigorously scrutinised by staff and the governing body and has a very positive impact on these pupils' learning. The effective promotion of equality of opportunity is reflected in the good progress made by the different groups of pupils represented in the school.
- Disabled pupils and those supported at school action and school action plus who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. In particular, they acquire effective reading and writing skills which enable them to tackle a wide range of subjects and succeed well.
- Pupils read fluently and widely by Year 6. Young pupils tackle new and unfamiliar words well because they have a thorough understanding of letters and their sounds and this is consistently improving. Pupils of all ages and abilities read with expression and enthusiasm. They enjoy many different styles and talk knowingly of the work of Roald Dahl or J.R.R. Tolkien, for example. They use their skills well in other subjects.
- Pupils' writing skills are good. There is a strong focus on ensuring accuracy in basic skills, such as spelling and grammar, and using them in creative ways. By Year 6 most pupils write at length with a fluent and accurate handwriting in ink. They make imaginative use of different tenses and use comparatives and superlatives to enrich their work.
- Pupils' mathematical skills are increasingly well developed. They have a generally good recall of number facts and mathematical vocabulary. They are systematic and thorough in completing their calculations, such as using chunking for division in Year 3, and apply them well in solving problems.
- The pupils make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) in many lessons. Their excellent use of 'green screen' technology, for example, made their studies in geography and history extremely memorable.
- Although achievement is at least good, pupils sometimes do not make the very best progress they could because the quality of teaching is not yet outstanding.

The quality of teaching is good

- Reading, writing and mathematical skills are taught well through direct and sharply focused lessons with a strong concentration on basic skills. For example, teachers systematically and thoroughly model how letters and sounds blend together to make new words using a wide range of resources, including ICT, to ensure they are understood and remembered well. Teachers expect pupils to use the skills they have learned regularly in other subjects accurately and thoughtfully.

- Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to read aloud during the school day, including regular use of ICT. They make good use of systematic reading schemes and a well-stocked library to promote good progress.
- Teachers make good use of accurate measures of pupils' progress to set work which is challenging and interesting to all abilities. In the very best lessons they use this to set a very good pace of learning where pupils move rapidly to the next stage.
- Teachers' expectations are high. They always expect at least good progress from all pupils and are extremely quick to intervene when achievement falls below this standard.
- Staff work as a team to provide additional lessons and programmes of work to address anything less than good progress. For example, all teachers run a wide range of engaging reading, writing and mathematics clubs at lunchtime and after school to boost learning further. This is a key reason for improving progress and standards for all pupils, especially those in receipt of the pupil premium.
- Teachers and well-deployed teaching assistants often inspire their pupils through imaginative and engaging activities. They make good use of ICT, role play, puppets, and quizzes and games. Teachers make good use of technology by showing pupils' work as a model for others and a springboard for further improvement.
- Teachers make good use of attractive displays of key information and pupils' work, especially their writing, to set examples for others to follow and also to celebrate success.
- Teachers mark work regularly and its use is sometimes exemplary. However, occasionally teachers do not make certain that pupils act on guidance given and ensure they improve their own work.
- Although teachers expect a lot of their pupils, they do not always equip them to work independently enough, for example by learning to use different sources of reference rather than relying too much on the teacher, to take the next steps in their learning.
- Teachers question pupils well to develop their knowledge and understanding. However, they do not always encourage pupils to respond fully and articulate their ideas in order to develop their thinking and, sometimes, their speaking skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Relationships are very good. As a result, pupils work together well and take care of each other.
- The school is calm, friendly and orderly. Pupils are well-behaved throughout the school. They listen attentively to teachers and their peers and attend well.
- Pupils take their responsibilities as school councillors seriously. They listen to the views of other pupils and contribute well to the daily life of the school. They make a significant contribution to improvements to playground and other facilities.
- Pupils often support other children in their learning and are, rightly, proud of this. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, work with younger pupils on reading, writing and mathematics activities which make a good contribution to the progress they all make.
- The school works well with all parents, especially those of pupils who have social, emotional or attendance concerns. They make good progress in helping pupils manage their own behaviour. Consequently, poor behaviour is rare and there have been few exclusions.
- Pupils feel safe and their parents feel they are well cared for. There is very little bullying and pupils know who to turn to if they have a worry. They make a good contribution to the maintenance of school rules and are sensitive to the needs of others. Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying.
- The pupils respond well to the strong spiritual, moral and social guidance they receive. They enjoy presenting their work and ideas in assemblies and receiving many awards and certificates for their success. They are sensitive to the plight of others in different circumstances and initiate and help run many fundraising activities.
- On the few occasions when teaching is not challenging enough, a few pupils lose concentration

and do not show the independence to persist without prompting.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides a clear vision for school improvement which is shared by staff, the governing body and parents alike. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, senior leadership team and subject leaders, who are enthusiastic and committed to the school's success. As a result, staff morale is high.
- The procedures to check and improve the quality of teaching are good. Senior staff provide strong role models for teachers and there are effective systems for sharing the best practice. The school is very aware of its strengths in the quality of teaching and is strongly focused on raising this to outstanding overall.
- Staff are held accountable for the progress their pupils make and are subject to fulfilling stringent criteria in order to achieve the next salary level.
- The procedures to analyse and measure pupils' progress are very detailed and accurate. They are used regularly and imaginatively by staff and the governing body to set high targets for improvements and to meet the needs well of all groups of pupils.
- The school makes good use of other local schools and independent education consultants for training and support. This has helped the school improve the quality of teaching and learning, for example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage and mathematics calculations.
- A strength of pupils' learning is the rich curriculum. The school makes very good use of the staff's specialist skills and this is very evident in, for example, the support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and in pupils' achievement in ICT. Subjects are interwoven well through central themes and supported by a range of visitors and visits, including whole-school visits. The curriculum promotes pupils' global awareness well and encourages empathy and consideration for others.
- The school tackles any rare issues of discrimination well and this contributes to the harmony within the school community.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very well led and well informed through good-quality reports and its own developing, systematic checks on the school's work and pupils' progress. The governing body makes good use of first-hand observations, discussions with subject and other leaders and a wide range of progress data to provide challenge to the leadership. Governors are involved in all aspects of the school's self-evaluation, appropriately decide whether teachers and staff should be rewarded with salary increases and review targets for the headteacher. They manage the finances well by, for example, using pupil premium funding to accurately target the needs of the pupils concerned and raise their achievement. The governing body ensures policies for safeguarding meet requirements and are supported by rigorous record keeping.

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	138129
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	413160

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Dean
Headteacher	Ann Dixon
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01325 244001
Fax number	01325 244555
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