

Silver Tree Primary School

Durham Road, Ushaw Moor, Durham, DH7 7LF

Inspection dates 8–9 October 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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement requires improvement because the progress that pupils make across the school is not consistently good.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Some is good, but much requires improvement and a small proportion of teaching seen during the inspection was inadequate.
- Some teachers do not expect enough of pupils. Pupils say that they are not always required to work hard enough on tasks that are challenging enough for them.
- Pupils are given too few chances to write at length in English and other subjects or to apply their skills in mathematics.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to explore ideas in groups or independently.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have not been adequately trained in teaching how to link sounds and letters (phonics). As a result, pupils' progress in reading is not as rapid as it should be.
- The school improvement plan is based on an over-optimistic view of the school's effectiveness. It lacks clear and rigorous success criteria to help leaders assess how effective it is.
- Leaders and teachers are not skilled enough in analysing data, the quality of teaching or the work in pupils' books to ensure that pupils are making good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Teachers in Year 2 and Year 6 ensure that most pupils achieve the skills expected for their age.
- Attainment has risen in Year 6 in the last three years. Pupils in Year 6 in 2013 made good progress.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding have attainment which is higher than other pupils in the school.
- The school offers pupils many exciting opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they say that they feel safe in school.
- The school offers highly effective care and support to pupils and their families.
- The governing body is committed to improving the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and the Chair and vice-chair of the governing body. The inspectors also met with the school's local authority Education Development Partner.
- They looked at a range of evidence including: the school's improvement plan; the school's data relating to pupils' progress; monitoring reports; the work in pupils' books, and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons taught by seven teachers and listened to groups of pupils in Years 1 and 2 read. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Inspectors conducted four joint observations of lessons with the headteacher. The inspectors also observed the headteacher reporting back to teachers on their findings regarding the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement in lessons.
- Too few parents had responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for their opinions to be published. However, inspectors analysed the school's own questionnaire of parents' views and received a letter from one parent.
- Eleven staff completed questionnaires and the responses were analysed.

Inspection team

Gordon Potter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Debra De Muschamp

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for 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.)
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- There is a breakfast club and lunchtime and after-school clubs which are managed by the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- Many more pupils than is the case across the country leave or join the school at other than the usual times.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, to further raise standards and rates of pupils' progress, by:
 - raising the expectations of teachers about what pupils can achieve so that pupils are required to work harder and faster on work that challenges them
 - offering pupils more opportunities to explore their own ideas independently or in groups, and more time to complete tasks
 - using data about pupils' attainment to plan work which is more closely matched to their individual skills and abilities, and to ensure that work becomes harder as pupils progress
 - offering pupils even more opportunities to apply their skills in real-life problem-solving activities in mathematics, and in writing imaginatively and at length in English and other subjects
 - developing the skills of teachers and teaching assistants so that there is a consistent, systematic approach to the teaching of how sounds and letters link together (phonics).
- Increase the impact that leaders at all levels have on pupils' attainment and progress by:
 - improving the skills of leaders in observing lessons and scrutinising pupils' work so that they form an accurate view of the quality of the learning that takes place and the progress that pupils make
 - improving the skills of leaders in analysing data and using it effectively to ensure that all pupils across the school make at least good progress
 - ensuring that the school development plan has clearly specified success criteria related to pupils' progress and attainment, which help school leaders evaluate its effectiveness.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most children start school with skills that are below those typically expected for their age. Children typically make expected progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, although some clearly targeted support in Year 2 helps them to achieve standards that are only slightly below average for their age. Too few pupils attain standards that are above those expected for their age.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 have risen in the past three years and were only slightly below average in 2012 and 2013. Pupils typically make the progress expected of them in Key Stage 2, although in 2013, pupils in Year 6 made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, too few pupils attain standards that are above those expected for their age in writing.
- Pupils currently in school are making only the progress expected of them because the quality of teaching is not consistently good and their work is not sufficiently challenging.
- The attainment of those pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium was in line with other pupils in school in 2012. In 2013, they were two terms ahead in reading, in line in writing and one term ahead in mathematics. While such pupils have achieved well, the school has been slow to recognise that all pupils have the ability to make more rapid progress and have higher attainment.
- Therefore, while the school is committed to the well-being of all groups of pupils and has a clear desire to promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination it is currently not sufficiently focused on ensuring pupils make rapid and sustained progress and attain the highest standards.
- Pupils with special educational needs make the progress expected of them, except in Years 2 and 6 where more targeted support helps them to make good progress. In other classes, teaching assistants are not used well enough to help pupils make good progress.
- Inspection evidence shows that pupils typically make the progress expected of them in reading. However, a few pupils are being left behind. This is a result of the lack of a consistent and systematic approach to the teaching of how to link sounds and letters to help pupils read words they are not used to. A drive to help pupils enjoy books and read more in school and at home has not yet had a full impact on increasing pupils' progress in reading.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable. Some is good, especially in Years 3, 5 and 6, although not consistently so. Even here, teachers who are confident in their own skills of explanation and questioning miss opportunities to let pupils get on quickly enough with work on their own or in groups. While a small proportion of inadequate teaching was seen during the inspection, the same teachers showed elsewhere that they had the skills to improve their expertise.
- The pace of learning is often slow and work not always matched well enough to the learning needs of individual pupils. In mathematics lessons in both key stages, for example, teachers typically lead pupils through a lengthy whole-class session where all pupils do the same work. It is often too easy for some pupils and too hard for others, but teachers do not act upon this and adapt work accordingly.
- Teachers provide work for pupils to attempt on their own which is of different levels of difficulty but even so, it is often too easy. Pupils repeat the same work over a week, engaging in some low-level activities. The mathematics curriculum offers too few opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematics skills in real-life problem-solving activities. It is not structured well enough to allow pupils to make consistent, rapid progress.
- Where teaching is good, teachers make lessons interesting. For example, in English lessons in Key Stage 2, teachers use a range of materials, including film, art and drama, to stimulate pupils' ideas for writing. Teachers use clear explanations and examples so that pupils are clear about the skill they are developing. As a result, pupils make good progress. However, even here, pupils are given too little time to use their skill in a longer, more sustained piece of writing.

- Books and displays which contain pupils' written work show that pupils make expected progress in writing. Some pupils have good writing skills. However, pupils do not write at length often enough to make consistently good progress.
- In some lessons where teachers allow pupils more opportunities to learn and explore together, for example in design technology and history lessons in Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress because they are excited by their work.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked and recent improvements are beginning to help pupils understand how to improve. While older pupils are clear about the level of their work, they are less certain about what they need to do to reach the next level.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say that behaviour is good in their lessons and around the school. Any minor misbehaviour such as some silliness in lessons is quickly dealt with by their teachers. Indeed, much good and excellent behaviour was evident in lessons during the inspection.
- Pupils are very keen to do their best in their work, although they are not always given the opportunity to develop independence and self-reliance in their learning. As a result, there can be some distractions when the pace of learning drops in their lessons.
- The needs of a very small number of pupils who have significant behavioural difficulties are very well managed by the school. There are clear expectations and a consistent system of rules and rewards which help pupils have a very clear understanding of how to behave well.
- Pupils feel very safe and are aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying or name-calling. As a result, pupils say that there is very little bullying in school and any incidents are quickly dealt with by playground friends and adults. They are confident that they can talk to their teachers about some incidents that happen outside of school and worry them.
- Older pupils look after younger children and help pupils play safely and enjoyably together. They develop social skills well through involvement in the breakfast, sports and after-school clubs. The school council has offered ideas and raised funds to buy the activity wall for the playground. Pupils enjoy the house system which helps them compete in work, attendance and sports, and the head girl and head boy are excellent role models for other pupils.
- As a result of clear initiatives introduced by the school to encourage pupils to attend regularly and on time, attendance has improved and is now only slightly below average. The proportion of pupils who are persistent absentees has decreased significantly.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- While the headteacher has acted to remove weak teaching and introduced initiatives which have helped to raise attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, these improvements have not yet ensured that teaching and progress are consistently good across school. The improvement in the progress made by Year 6 in 2013 has masked the areas where the school requires further improvement.
- As a result, the school is over-optimistic about its own strengths. The current school improvement plan does not focus sufficiently on the key areas of raising attainment and improving teaching. Criteria by which leaders can know how successful they have been are not sharp enough and not easily measurable.
- While the school has a lot of information about pupils' attainment and progress, it is not well-managed, understood or used well enough by school leaders. The school's analysis focuses on how many pupils have made expected progress, rather than on ensuring that pupils make more than expected progress.
- Likewise, targets set for teachers as part of their performance management have not been rigorous enough. While staff are now clear that they will only be rewarded by moving up the pay scale when their pupils have done as well as they should have done, this has not always been the case. More rigorous targets have only recently been put in place to ensure pupils make good progress. As a result, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do have not been high enough.

- While the headteacher has a clear view of what constitutes good teaching and offers clear feedback to staff about the strengths of their teaching, this understanding has not yet been strongly enough applied where teaching is weaker. As a result, there is too little teaching that is consistently good or better across school. There has been insufficient training to help teachers gain a clear understanding of how to teach pupils to link sounds and letters, or to understand how pupils learn best.
- Funding to support the learning of those pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium has been used highly successfully to offer greater support to develop their basic skills and to broaden their experiences of cultural activities.
- The sports premium funding has been used effectively to develop competitive sports and links with a professional rugby club, as well as encouraging physical activity in lunchtime and after-school activities. These are contributing well to pupils' physical development. This is supported by some good teaching of physical education.
- The curriculum includes many enrichment activities which pupils enjoy and, at its best, helps them to see how subjects link together. It offers pupils chances to develop their fitness and sporting skills and helps support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It fosters an enjoyment of art, drama and music.
- However, the curriculum is less successful in ensuring that the work pupils do in English and mathematics lessons is interesting enough or gets harder as they get older.
- The local authority supports the school and has been engaged in helping the school to review its teaching and achievement. Linked to the school's own evaluation, it has been over-optimistic about the school's effectiveness.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body offers strong support to the school and governors are regularly involved in school activities. They know how the sports premium funding and pupil premium funding are allocated and are clear about their impact. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. All staff have been vetted and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm. The budget is well managed and has been successfully used to improve the school environment. Governors have striven to improve their understanding of how well the school is performing and have introduced systems to monitor the curriculum and teaching. For example, they have a very clear understanding about how effectively religious education is taught. However, they remain over-reliant on the headteacher's view of the school's effectiveness, including pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and the impact of performance management. As a result, teaching and achievement require improvement.

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	123350
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	425848

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	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jimmy Jamieson
Headteacher	John Trueman
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2011
Telephone number	0191 373 0622
Fax number	0191 373 0622
Email address	p3519.admin@durhamlearning.net

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