

Appletree Gardens First School

Appletree Gardens, Monkseaton, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, NE25 8XS

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Significant improvements have been made in pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and in pupils' behaviour since the last inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is now good. From below average starting points, pupils in Year 4 reach standards that are above those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is typically good, and some is outstanding.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and is promoted very well through a wide range of activities.
- Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the school. They say they feel safe and they show care and consideration towards one another.
- The headteacher's leadership is effective and she has worked extremely hard to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour. She is supported well by other key leaders who are also committed to improving the school.
- Members of the effective governing body make a strong contribution to school improvement as they use their skills and expertise well to provide strategic direction for the work of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although excellent practice is beginning to be shared, this has not yet ensured enough outstanding teaching across the school.
- Teaching, although it enables pupils to develop good basic skills, does not always provide pupils with opportunities for creative learning or to discover things for themselves.
- Teachers do not always ask challenging questions to enable pupils to think more deeply about their learning.
- In a few lessons, there is not always a high level of challenge for pupils to extend their learning further.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 23 lessons, taught by 13 teachers. Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors evaluated behaviour in lessons and around the school and heard several pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, groups of pupils, several school leaders, two members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 39 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and analysed questionnaires from 29 members of staff. Some parents and carers were spoken to informally on the school yard and the school's own parental survey results were taken into account.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents including the school improvement plan, information about pupils' attainment and progress, pupils' work and teachers' planning.

Inspection team

Christine Inkster, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Pattinson

Additional Inspector

Peter Eves

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and children from service families) is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. There is a small proportion of minority ethnic pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- There is no alternative or off-site provision.
- The school is not subject to the government's floor standards as pupils leave at the end of Year 4.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs are managed by the governing body within the children's centre which is based on the school premises. The children's centre is no longer managed by the governing body and did not form part of this inspection.
- On 13 June 2013, the school became a Trust School.
- There have been some staffing changes recently, including the appointment of a new Early Years Foundation Stage leader.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding in order to raise achievement further by:
 - improving the quality of teachers' questioning so that pupils are enabled to think more deeply about what they are learning
 - ensuring that there is constantly a high level of challenge for pupils so they are always fully engaged in their learning
 - ensuring there are more opportunities for pupils to engage in creative and exploratory learning
 - ensuring that the outstanding practice already evident in the school is shared among all staff.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start Nursery with skills and abilities that are below those typical for children of their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and leave the Reception Year well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- In Years 1 to 4, pupils continue to make good progress and attainment is rising. The school's data and pupils' work show that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 4 is now above that typically expected for their age showing good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' learning in lessons is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and they quickly gain the knowledge and skills they need to help them improve further. They work well together in groups and pairs and appreciate the opportunity to discuss their ideas with their 'talk partners' which helps to consolidate their understanding.
- Pupils of all ages enjoy their reading, and during the inspection parents, carers and volunteers were invited into school to share books with pupils. This was a positive experience for all involved. In 2013, the proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected level in the phonics check was above average. Pupils use their phonic knowledge well (sounds and the letters they represent) to tackle unfamiliar words and as a result, are reading above the expected levels for their age. New initiatives in promoting writing throughout the school are showing an impact in respect of raised attainment.
- In mathematics lessons, pupils make good progress particularly when they are given opportunities to become involved in practical and problem-solving activities. They are able to apply their skills well in 'real-life' situations which make learning more meaningful for them.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally make similar progress to their peers with some making more than expected progress. These pupils receive effective, targeted support, mainly within the classroom, from teachers and teaching assistants which meets their particular needs well.
- Boys and girls make similar progress and attain equally well. The most-able pupils also make good progress, particularly when challenging work is set for them. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive good support to enable them to access all aspects of the curriculum and by the end of Year 4 most attain above expectations for their age.
- Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding make similar progress to their peers. The gap between these pupils' attainment and that of their peers is narrowing throughout the school and is approximately two terms behind that of other pupils by the end of Year 4. The funding has been used effectively to increase the amount of support for pupils through additional teaching and teaching assistant support, training for staff and the purchase of resources and specific programmes to promote pupils' skills, particularly in reading and writing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. There is some outstanding teaching. The improved quality of teaching has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement, enabling pupils to make good progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are provided with interesting indoor and outdoor activities which cover all the areas of learning. Good attention is paid to developing children's speaking and listening skills which prepares them well for future learning. Nursery children were very excited when they accompanied the teacher on a 'bear hunt'. The teacher created an imaginative 'journey' which stimulated children's interest and they spoke with great enthusiasm about their journey and how they found the bear.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching, for example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson; pupils were learning how to measure the 'perimeter' of shapes. The lesson was conducted at a

very brisk pace and pupils were highly motivated to complete their tasks. The teacher asked some searching questions which promoted pupils' thinking skills well. The pupils responded particularly well to problem-solving activities, when the teacher asked them to design a 'rabbit run' and to measure the perimeter. This created a real sense of purpose in their learning and they were able to identify 'real life' examples of when these mathematical skills would be useful, for example, when marking out a football or rugby pitch.

- There are very good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils cooperate well together in pairs and groups, when they are given the opportunity to work on tasks together. They have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons.
- While questioning is highly effective in some lessons, this is not always the case. Teachers do not always ask probing questions to enable pupils to think more deeply about what they are learning. Occasionally, there is not a high enough level of challenge for some pupils and this reduces their interest and engagement in learning.
- In some lessons, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to engage in creative learning and activities where they are able to find out things for themselves.
- Assessment is used well to plan 'next steps' in learning for pupils and there is good attention paid to meeting pupils' individual needs. Support staff are deployed effectively during lessons to help promote pupils' learning.
- Teachers ensure that pupils understand what they are going to learn and helpful 'steps to success' are provided to guide pupils' learning. Pupils know their individual learning targets and understand what they have to do to achieve them. Marking and feedback are effective, identifying what pupils have done well and what they have to do to improve. Pupils have good opportunities to respond to marking, sometimes resulting in an extended dialogue between pupil and teacher.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- Behaviour has significantly improved and is now good. The school has introduced a new strategy which has had a notable impact. Behaviour is managed very well by staff in lessons and at playtimes and lunchtimes. At lunchtimes, staff act as facilitators for a range of games and activities and older pupils take their duties as monitors very seriously. Pupils work and play cooperatively together and show kindness to one another. Pupils indicate that behaviour is typically good over time and the positive views expressed by the vast majority of parents and carers reflect the inspection findings.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and join in activities with interest and enthusiasm, particularly when the work is challenging for them.
- Pupils say that there is very little bullying and they know they can seek help from an adult if they have a worry or concern. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying; they are aware of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media and have a good understanding of homophobic bullying. They are adamant that this would be challenged by staff should it occur.
- All parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire 'Parent View' indicated that the school kept their children safe.
- Through the curriculum, pupils have a good understanding of different faiths and cultures and show respect and consideration for others. There is a monthly theme or value, for example, 'bravery' and this is constantly revisited and promoted within lessons and assemblies. There are many opportunities for pupils to express their feelings and reflect on their learning and behaviour. This does much to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is a real strength of the school.
- Attendance is broadly average and the school does much to encourage pupils to attend school regularly and on time.

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has gained the confidence and respect of the pupils, staff, governors and the wider school community and has been the key in bringing about significant improvements since the last inspection. She has a very clear vision of how she wishes to improve the school and the impact of her work can be seen in the rising achievement of pupils, and significant improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour.
- There is strong teamwork among staff and all staff are committed to ensuring the best for pupils. School leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the areas for which they are responsible. Leaders are regularly involved in checking and evaluating the quality of teaching through carrying out lesson observations and scrutinizing pupils' work. They hold staff to account for pupils' progress through half-termly pupil progress meetings and ensure that any underachievement is addressed so that pupils make as much progress as they can.
- Considerable emphasis has been placed on improving the quality of teaching, particularly through weekly staff training sessions. There are effective procedures for appraising staff performance and all teaching staff have targets linked to pupils' progress as well as for any responsibilities which they hold. There are good opportunities for staff to develop their skills through visits to other schools and when they are able to attend external training sessions, for example, an 'outstanding teacher' programme. However, outstanding practice is not yet fully shared across the school.
- The school self-evaluation is accurate and the headteacher demonstrated an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. This was shown through joint lesson observations conducted with the inspector. Leaders have fully addressed all the issues identified in the previous inspection, particularly in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour, and as a result, demonstrate a strong capacity to improve the school further.
- This is a very caring and inclusive school where all pupils are valued and enabled to access all the school has to offer. There are no signs of discrimination and staff work hard to ensure that all groups of pupils do as well as they can, for example, in narrowing the gap between those pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding and their peers and in supporting pupils who speak English as an additional language so they have access to all aspects of the curriculum.
- Parents and carers have positive views of the work of the school and all who responded to the questionnaire on Parent View indicated they would recommend the school to other parents and carers.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and caters very well for the individual needs of pupils, particularly in relation to developing their literacy and numeracy skills. There are good opportunities for pupils to engage in a range of additional activities and clubs, and pupils appreciate opportunities to go on school visits, including, for example, a residential visit. The recent funding provided to promote pupils' physical development and extend sporting activities is being used well. Support is provided by coaches to enhance teachers' skills in teaching a range of different sports and provide additional sporting opportunities for pupils. This does much to promote healthy lifestyles and pupils have a good understanding of how healthy eating and exercise is beneficial for them.
- Safeguarding systems and procedures meet all national requirements and are regularly reviewed. Staff are rigorous in ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable children.
- The local authority has provided a range of support as requested by the headteacher and this has been greatly valued by staff. The local authority has a clear overview of the school's performance and has readily acknowledged the efforts of the headteacher and other leaders in moving the school forward.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is strong and has an impact on the strategic direction of the school. Members of the governing body have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. They have used their skills and expertise to assist in providing solutions to problems within the school, for example, in creating and designing a walkway to the dining room and making suggestions to improve the behaviour and supervision of pupils at lunchtimes. Members of the governing body regularly make visits to the school so that they can gain first-hand evidence of the impact of initiatives and help them evaluate the quality of teaching (as some governors are qualified teachers). Visits have covered a range of areas such as literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, health and safety, and behaviour. Governors have a good understanding of the performance of the school through regular discussions on pupils' achievement and school data and challenge the school to improve. They contribute to the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well and has a clear understanding of how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact of this on the achievement of eligible pupils. Governors also ensure the sports premium funding is being used effectively to promote healthy lifestyles for pupils and increase their participation in sport and exercise. They are fully informed about performance management and aware of the link between teacher's pay and performance.

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	108584
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	425784

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	310
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Noble
Headteacher	Jillian Burrell
Date of previous school inspection	29 February 2012
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