

Toft Hill Primary School

Toft Hill, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL14 0JA

Inspection dates

4–5 February 2014

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.

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Pupils make rapid and sustained progress across the school so that, by the end of Year 6, standards in reading and mathematics are above average, with many pupils gaining the higher Level 5.
- Although pupils do well in writing, the proportion of pupils who make better-than-expected progress is not as high in writing as in other subjects.
- Pupils read widely but they do not always use the techniques employed in the books they have read to enliven their own writing. Pupils occasionally misspell words.
- Outstanding teaching across the school ensures that pupils make excellent progress from their individual starting points. The work planned for pupils provides exactly the right degree of difficulty.
- Teachers plan exciting lessons that capture pupils' imagination. Pupils have many opportunities to work together and to learn for themselves from investigations and research.
- Teaching assistants, and other adults, are highly effective in supporting pupils' learning.
- Behaviour is outstanding as are pupils' attitudes to their work. Both contribute strongly to pupils' excellent progress.
- Pupils are very positive about school. They say they feel extremely safe in school and enjoy everything about it. This delight in school has contributed to pupils' increased rates of attendance.
- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. This encourages all pupils and staff to achieve their full potential.
- The senior leadership team is highly effective and maintains a relentless focus on continuously improving the achievement of all pupils.
- A wide range of visits to places of local interest, as well as visitors bringing additional skills and expertise, extend pupils' learning experience. These experiences also make an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders and managers have a very clear understanding of how well the school is doing. Middle leaders are highly effective and rigorously check pupils' progress.
- Governors make a significant contribution to the school's outstanding provision. They use their wide range of skills and expertise to support and challenge the school so that the needs of all pupils are met.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 part-lessons taught by seven teachers. In addition, inspectors observed three phonics teaching sessions as well as intervention groups linked to phonics and mathematics. Three observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of pupils about their learning in lessons and their safety in school. Inspectors listened to 12 pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 read.
- A review of a wide range of pupils' work was undertaken that included English, mathematics, science and topic books from each year group.
- Inspectors held meetings with two parent governors and a telephone conversation was conducted with the Chair of the Governing Body, school staff and a representative from the local authority. In addition, inspectors looked at the school's review of its performance, its development plan, as well as safeguarding information, school policies and the minutes of governors' meetings.
- The inspectors analysed 32 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors spoke to some parents during the school day. They also considered the results of a school questionnaire sent to parents in summer 2013.
- The views of 21 staff who returned inspection questionnaires were taken into account.

Inspection team

David Wilson , Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Frank Cain

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- All pupils are White British. There is a roughly equal number of boys and girls.
- The number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs varies from year to year. This year the proportion of pupils supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those children known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after and children from service families.
- The school provides and manages a before- and after-school facility.
- The school currently provides additional leadership and management support to other schools in partnership with the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils making better- than-expected progress in writing to above average by:
 - further enhancing pupils' understanding of characters, story lines and settings, including encouraging them to transfer the techniques used in the books they have read to their own writing
 - developing a programme of spelling that increases the accuracy of spelling across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children join the school from several nurseries and pre-school providers. Their skills vary from year to year and are generally below those typical for their age. They are often low in aspects of personal and social development and in their language and communication.
- As a result of the high quality support from teachers and teaching assistants, children in the Reception Year make excellent progress in their personal and social skills and in their language and communication skills. For example, on entry to Reception Year, few children can write or form letters correctly. By the middle of their first term, many children are writing single words independently and, by the middle of their second term, a large majority of children are confidently writing simple sentences by themselves.
- By the end of Year 2, in most years, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are often above average, although more recently they have been average. Nevertheless, pupils in Key Stage 1 have achieved very well from their individual starting points. The most recent screening check at the end of Year 1 showed that pupils' skills in linking letters and sounds (phonics) were exceptionally high, with all pupils attaining at least the level expected nationally. Parents make an excellent contribution to their child's reading and evidence in pupils' home-school reading records show that parents encourage their children to read regularly.
- At Key Stage 2, standards in reading and mathematics have been above average for several years. The proportion of pupils making better-than-expected progress in reading and mathematics is significantly above that found nationally. In 2013, pupils' standards in the new test for English grammar, punctuation and spelling were well-above average.
- In 2013, attainment in writing was not as high as in other subjects and progress was good, rather than outstanding. Pupils do not always achieve the highest levels possible because they have not yet developed the ability to transfer the techniques used by authors of the books they are reading into their own writing and their spelling is not always accurate when they write at length.
- The most-able pupils make excellent progress. In 2013 an above average proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 5, especially in reading and mathematics, because teachers have high expectations of pupils and give them challenging work to complete.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress. This is due to the high quality support provided by teachers and teaching assistants, both in class teaching and in the targeted support work carried out in small working groups.
- In 2013, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals reached the same high standards as those of their peers in mathematics. In reading and spelling, grammar and punctuation in 2013, they were approximately six months behind their peers. They reached similar standards to those of their peers in writing at the end of Key Stage 2. The gap in attainment is closed swiftly because these pupils make outstanding progress, particularly in their reading and mathematics.
- Analysis of pupils' workbooks shows that pupils take great pride in their work and standards of presentation are high across the school. Many subjects promote the use of basic skills of literacy and numeracy very successfully. For example, science books in Years 2 and 5 show excellent examples of pupils using data-handling, tally charts and numerical tables to record the findings of experiments and investigations.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Outstanding and often inspirational teaching has developed excellent attitudes among pupils to their work. Lessons are exceptionally well-planned and carefully structured and, as a result, pupils make outstanding progress.
- Teachers plan exciting lessons that inspire and motivate pupils. Pupils fully embrace the opportunities they have to work by themselves and carry out investigations. In an outstanding

Year 4 history lesson, pupils were absolutely fascinated when presented with the task of completing an archaeological dig to find out about Roman artefacts. Pupils made excellent progress in finding out about the past from artefacts hidden in the ground, including the age of the object, the material it was made from and its specific use. They also made excellent progress in recording their findings.

- Teachers are extremely skilful in building upon pupils' previous learning and, as a result, provide suitably difficult tasks and activities. In an outstanding Year 6 English lesson, the teacher used previous work on the author Michael Morpurgo to support pupils' writing to establish an exciting story opening linked to a catastrophe affecting a town. All pupils made excellent progress in their ability to establish powerful imagery within their writing. Most-able pupils were further challenged to include similes and a wide range of adverbs to extend their writing. This demonstrates the school's work to further enhance progress in writing.
- Pupils are clear about the expectations teachers have in terms of completing tasks within given time scales. No time is lost at the start of lessons and movement between activities is efficient and managed extremely well.
- Teachers use questioning skills extremely effectively to probe pupils' level of understanding and to challenge pupils to refine their thinking and encourage them to express their ideas in a precise and detailed way. The vast majority of pupils have excellent listening skills and most pupils provide extended answers to questions. These often indicate a good level of subject knowledge. In an excellent Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils were challenged to listen and think hard to solve number problems linked to finding the relative ages of family members shown on a family tree.
- Teachers' marking makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning. Analysis of pupils' books shows that marking is regular and of a high quality. Pupils are given a clear indication of how well they have achieved and how they can improve their work further. Workbooks also show how pupils have acted upon the advice given and how this has had a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Teaching assistants and other adults, including visiting specialist and coaches, make an excellent contribution to learning. Teaching assistants use skilful questioning to find out what pupils know and so support pupils in improving their work. They provide very effective support to small groups of least-able pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. All pupils are eager to learn and, as a result, lessons proceed smoothly without interruption. Pupils have a hunger for knowledge and are very keen to extend their skills. The vast majority of pupils show excellent levels of concentration in lessons. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrate an amazing level of application to their learning as pupils work in silence or quietly discuss their work in pairs or small groups.
- Behaviour in lessons is exemplary. From Reception Year upwards, pupils are aware of the need for good listening and of the importance of following instructions carefully. In an early morning 'wake and shake' session, some of the youngest Reception children gently reminded their classmates about not talking when the adult was talking and the importance of lining up quietly and safely when moving from a physical education lesson in the hall back to the classroom.
- Around the school, pupils' behaviour is impeccable. Pupils are polite, courteous and show high levels of respect to each other and to adults in the school. They take great pride in their work and in their school. They treat the school building and resources with immense respect and this is particularly evident in how pupils move around the school, given the restrictions of space within the building.
- Pupils work and play extremely well together. At break times and lunch times they are very active and enjoy team games. No misbehaviour was seen during the two days of the inspection.
- Pupils are confident there is no bullying in school and, if it should happen, they know what to

do. Pupils are very positive about the school and the vast majority want to stay longer in school. Few examples of poor behaviour are recorded and are always followed up thoroughly. This is reinforced by the high take-up of places at the school's before- and after-school clubs that take place every day.

- Pupils are exceptionally clear about cyber-bullying and what to do to stay safe when using the internet.
- Pupils speak positively about the many opportunities they have to take responsibility. Pupils are highly motivated by the many educational visits, sporting opportunities and residential visits available to them.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. From an early age, pupils are acutely aware of their own safety. A Reception child, playing in the large construction area, told inspectors they were wearing a safety helmet to protect their head while they were building.
- Pupils say they feel extremely safe and secure in school. They understand the fire drill routines; they also know how to keep safe in the playground and in the classroom. The school makes good use of its links with community police officers and this includes regular visits to reinforce the importance of road safety, given the school's proximity to a very busy road.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and those who spoke to inspectors, agree that their children are kept safe and that they enjoy school.
- Attendance is in line with the national average and has shown an increasing trend over time, with very few persistent absentees.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher provides very motivating leadership. She has built a strong culture of teamwork across the school. Her drive and ambition for all pupils and staff to achieve their potential make a major contribution to this outstanding school. Staff are very clear about what the school is trying to achieve and are highly committed to providing an excellent education for the pupils in their care.
- All leaders and managers have an accurate view of school effectiveness. They check the quality of teaching rigorously and identify professional development to drive up standards of achievement and increase rates of progress even further. They make a strong contribution to whole-school planning and promoting the continuous improvement of the school.
- Middle leaders contribute exceptionally well to raising standards through a thorough programme of planning reviews, scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, and lesson observations. Action plans that are based on accurate analysis of data are effectively raising levels of pupil achievement across the curriculum.
- Arrangements to check the performance of teachers are extremely thorough and identify the skills needed to improve even further. Teaching assistants and administrative staff are included in the process of professional review and this is successful in identifying individual training needs to complement already excellent subject knowledge.
- The school's curriculum is outstanding because of the many exciting and inspirational activities that enable pupils to learn exceptionally well. The curriculum promotes a deep level of enjoyment. An impressive range of extra-curricular activities complement pupils' work in classes. A wide range of visits, links with the local community, support for local national and international charities and the large take-up for music and the arts make an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- All pupils have access to high quality sport and physical education; participation in extra-curricular sport is high. Additional funding through the new primary school sport funding is used effectively to support additional sporting opportunities for pupils, the use of specialist coaches to improve the quality of sporting achievement of pupils and to improve staff expertise.
- Partnerships with parents, local pre-school providers and other welfare agencies are very strong and support pupils to achieve at an outstanding level.

- The local authority has provided support to governors on using data, on finance and on performance management. Support has also been provided to the headteacher and senior leaders in checking the quality of teaching and in the moderation of writing samples. The local authority has a clear view of the school's strengths and is making good use of them to support work in other schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have wide range of talents and know the school exceptionally well. As a result of reports, regular presentations from subject leaders, regular visits to the school and meetings with senior leaders, governors are acutely aware of the school's strengths and current priorities for further development. They use national data well to compare the school's performance against that of other schools and use this to both challenge and support the headteacher. Governors are very clear about the achievement and progress of different groups of pupils including the most-able, those with special educational needs and those receiving additional support through the pupil premium funding. They have been involved in agreeing the spending of the pupil premium and check the impact of this by carefully checking the relevant pupils' progress.
 - Governors have an effective system to review performance management, including that of the headteacher, and are involved in determining teachers' levels of pay. Governors ensure that safeguarding and safety in and around the school are given a high priority. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory 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	114107
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	431330

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	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Barron
Headteacher	Janice Stobbs
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2009
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