

Wheatley Hill Community Primary School

Wheatley Hill, Durham, DH6 3RQ,

Inspection dates 4–5 February 2014

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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well from their individual starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are at the national average.
- The school was in the top 10% nationally for adding value to pupils' learning in reading and mathematics in 2013.
- Pupils with special educational needs, including those attending the language resource provision, make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is consistently good or better. Lessons are purposeful, interesting and fun.
- Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. This is why pupils are making rapid progress. They learn avidly.
- The school makes sure that pupils are safe and secure. Parents agree that their children feel safe at school and are very keen to learn.
- Good leadership of teaching means that pupils' achievement is improving at a significant rate, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Governors have been fully involved in driving forward the fast pace of change in the last 18 months. They support and challenge in equal measures.
- The headteacher has succeeded in creating a school to which pupils want to come and where parents feel supported.
- Staff say, 'It is a great place to work for both children and adults.' This is confirmed by pupils' rocketing attendance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' writing is not as good as it should be because they do not write often enough from the Early Years Foundation Stage upwards.
- Pupils tend to write in simple sentences. Their vocabulary is limited so they use simple verbs.
- Teachers do not get pupils to read and write material that includes dialogue, such as plays. This means that pupils miss out on how to write effective dialogue.
- Middle leaders do not check how well pupils use literacy skills in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 13 lessons or parts of lessons taught by nine teachers.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, staff, three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, the parent support adviser, the school counsellor, the behaviour support teacher and the head of the language resource provision. They also had discussions with two groups of pupils from Years 3 to 6.
- Insufficient responses were available on the online questionnaire (Parent View) for the lead inspector to be able to access them. The inspectors gathered the views of a large number of parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Lesley Clark, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Firth

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The majority of pupils are supported through the pupil premium. This proportion is high. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The headteacher started in September 2012. This was preceded by two years of interim leadership and management. A third of staff have left or joined the school since then.
- The school has a language resource provision for up to 10 primary-aged pupils with severe speech, language and communication difficulties. Pupils attending the language resource provision have a statement of special educational needs and travel to school from across the county. The pupils join their year group whenever possible. The large majority attend the language resource provision for literacy and numeracy lessons. A speech and language therapist is based in school.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of a 52-place Nursery and a Reception class. The children work alongside children from the Wheatley Hill Community Nursery, which offers wrap around care. The Wheatley Hill Community Nursery is inspected separately. The inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in writing across the school by making sure that teachers:
 - give pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, more reasons and opportunities to write more often in a wide range of different contexts
 - enable pupils to develop a wide vocabulary, use more interesting verbs and write complex sentences
 - give pupils more opportunities to read and write material such as plays so they learn how to write effective dialogue
 - involve middle leaders in checking how well literacy skills are used in different subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well from individual starting points that are low compared to expected levels.
- By the end of the Reception Year, the majority of children are close to the level expected for their age and a minority reach a good level of development. This reflects the much improved provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage since September 2012.
- Children achieve well because good quality equipment, thought-provoking tasks and activities, both indoors and outside, stimulate their curiosity and imaginations. This results in a good pace of learning. For example, children delighted in building a car with large bricks that was taller than themselves. Others chattered eagerly as they had 'real water' to wash rice off the dishes in 'the Chinese restaurant.' Staff sometimes miss opportunities to incorporate early writing skills into these activities.
- Pupils achieve well in Key Stage 1. Progress has been rapid over the past year as pupils make up previous gaps in their learning. Their attainment in the phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening check at the end of Year 1 is broadly average.
- By the end of Year 2, current standards are above average in mathematics and close to average in reading and writing, an improvement on the 2013 national test results.
- Progress accelerates in Key Stage 2, especially in Year 6. This is most evident in reading and mathematics where pupils make measurable gains in acquiring knowledge and skills.
- By Year 5, pupils turn into competent readers, well able to skim read and scan for information. 'Fastest finger first', most-able pupils joked as they skim read for specific information. Older pupils have favourite authors and have several books on the go at once. They borrow regularly from the school and class libraries which are well stocked with fiction, non-fiction and poetry but not with plays.
- Mathematics is many pupils' favourite subject because, 'We find out new things and it makes you work hard.' The most able pupils shine, with a similar proportion to that found nationally working at the very high Level 6.
- In the 2013 national tests at the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils meeting expected levels in reading and mathematics was above the national average and close to the national proportion reaching the higher Level 5. Currently, pupils in Years 3 to 6 are above age-related expectations in reading and mathematics and close to those expected in writing.
- Across the school, achievement in writing lags behind that in reading and mathematics. However, the above average results in the 2013 national tests for English grammar, punctuation and spelling show that the school's decision to teach basic skills first is clearly working.
- At present, pupils' writing shows they have a limited vocabulary and tend to use mundane verbs, simple sentences and uninteresting dialogue. They do not write extensively in a wide range of different contexts, including play scripts.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium funding catch up because of the extra help they receive. By the end of Key Stage 2, they outperform similar groups nationally, especially at the higher Level 5, where they are over a year ahead. They do as well as other pupils in school who are not known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Pupils supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, including those in the language resource provision, make outstanding progress. They do exceptionally well compared to similar groups nationally. Most reach expected levels in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 because of the consistently high quality support they receive throughout the school.
- The school clearly tackles discrimination and promotes equal opportunities well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good throughout the school and sometimes better. It is outstanding in Year 6, in the language resource provision and for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils make exceptionally good progress in lessons because teachers expect the best from them and so pupils strive to fulfil their high expectations.
- Teachers make good provision for the most able pupils in their classes, often setting them off on different and more challenging tasks while they explain in further detail to other pupils who are slower to understand new concepts.
- In all classes, teachers use computer technology very well. They are adept at using it to highlight specific aspects of pupils' work, which they then use as teaching points.
- Good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is characterised by exciting learning activities in a language-rich environment. These link with challenges, designed to extend children's skills.
- Across the school, teaching helps pupils to acquire knowledge and skills rapidly and effectively.
- Teachers teach what pupils need to know: they identify where the gaps are and plan lessons accordingly. They deploy teaching assistants carefully to teach specific skills to individuals or groups of pupils so that all pupils have the help they need. This is why pupils are catching up rapidly.
- Teaching and learning is strongest in Year 6. Lessons are fast-paced because pupils keep up, concentrating intently as the teaching intensifies the challenges. For instance, pupils quickly grasped the mathematical equivalences to words to explain probability. Pupils accurately described mental and oral mathematics sessions as, 'The fast and the furious!' This also stretches the most able pupils to their limit.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge means that they know how to extend pupils' learning. For example, pupils' debating skills improved markedly in terms of grammatical accuracy and fluency because they were required to use persuasive connectives and rhetorical questions each time they spoke. This further extends the skills of the most able pupils.
- Teaching English grammar, spelling and punctuation is a strength. However, giving pupils opportunities to write often and for different reasons and in different contexts are relative weaknesses. Some pupils still find it quite hard to get down to writing.
- Marking is effective. Pupils pointed out, 'Teachers always leave us an improvement and talk us through it so we know how to improve it in future.'

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. It is one of the main reasons why pupils' achievement is rising so quickly.
- Typically, pupils arrive in good time for lessons, ready to learn. They listen intently, concentrating to the full. They ask questions when they do not understand and move on speedily to the next challenge because they want to do well.
- A telling example is the 'grammar police', when pupils take turns to signal when classmates and teachers speak ungrammatically or use banned dialect words such as 'yous'. This is done with some hilarity, but underlies an earnest desire to 'speak properly'. It also shows the excellent relationships and mutual respect between staff and pupils as they correct each other in a very good-natured way.
- At break times or when moving down the long corridors, pupils behave responsibly and with consideration for others. Older pupils are excellent role models. Lunchtimes are quiet, sociable occasions when older pupils look after younger ones and make polite conversation.
- Outside, play leaders and mediators make sure that everyone has someone to play with them. They know it is 'our right to play and be safe.'
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is excellent. Pupils say there is no bullying and the school's evidence confirms their positive views. Their parents agree.

- Pupils are fully aware of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. There is no name-calling or racism. What lifts their understanding above the ordinary is their keen perception that ‘the internet could tell you anything’. They clearly think for themselves.
- Pupils are proud of taking part in competitive sports, one outcome of the primary school sports funding. Their attendance has shot up over the past 18 months and is currently above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher’s belief that ‘only the best will do’ is clearly reflected in the many improvements since the last inspection. These range from updating learning equipment and the fabric of the building, to getting parents involved with their children’s learning.
- Under leadership that the staff characterise as ‘strong and direct’, the headteacher has generated a real passion for learning. This is underpinned by good leadership of teaching, which ensures that pupils catch up and then progress further so that standards of attainment rise.
- The curriculum is tailored to pupils’ needs. It is designed to extend pupils’ general knowledge and skills. It gives them many first-hand experiences through educational visits and visitors to school. The school regularly invites authors to school in order to raise the profile of literacy.
- The pupil premium funding is used well to support pupils’ academic achievement. As a result, pupils are determined to succeed and have higher aspirations.
- Teachers are fully accountable for the progress their pupils make. They hold regular meetings to check on pupils’ progress so they can give timely support to those who need extra help. The impact of this is seen in raised achievement and significantly better progress rates in 2013 compared to those nationally. It is too soon to see whether these are sustained over time.
- Aspects of leadership are exceptionally strong, such as the leadership of special educational needs, the language resource provision and the clear direction that senior leaders give staff.
- Performance management and appraisal are used well to reward very effective teaching and to ensure that staff have up-to-date professional development.
- Middle leadership is developing well, with middle leaders now undertaking more extensive analysis of progress in literacy and mathematics through observing lessons and examining pupils’ work in books.
- As yet, middle leaders do not check how well literacy is used in different subjects.
- The new primary school sports funding is allocated to improving teachers’ skills through high quality coaching. It also provides a full programme of competitions, festivals and tournaments as well as after-school clubs. In addition, it offers opportunities for young leaders to train and lead others. This has generated huge enthusiasm for sport across the school.
- The local authority gave quite a lot of support to the school initially because the headteacher was new to headship. It now gives light touch support to this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know exactly what their role entails. They carry out their responsibilities scrupulously. They have a good understanding of data and use the information to hold the school to account for the progress that pupils, including those supported through the pupil premium, make. They have had up-to-date training, which has sharpened their capacity to ask penetrating questions and to check for themselves how well things are going. They tackle staffing issues fearlessly and make wise decisions that benefit the school. They are closely involved in the management of staff. The school is over-subscribed in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result.

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	114147
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	430863

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	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jayne Dinsdale
Headteacher	Rebecca Pavey
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2012
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