

Marsden Primary School

Mill Lane, Whitburn Colliery, Sunderland, SR6 7HJ

Inspection dates 11–12 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has improved since its last inspection because the headteacher has skilfully led and guided the hardworking and aspirational staff, raising the achievement of pupils. Both the local authority and the governing body have supported the headteacher and the school well.
- Pupils are now making good progress, from their individual starting points, across the school. Improved progress is particularly evident in mathematics, and pupils' writing skills have also improved. Pupils have in the past made better progress in reading than in other aspects of literacy.
- Due to high quality leadership and the dedication of all staff, children get off to a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Gaps in the achievement of pupils supported through the pupil premium and all pupils in school closed in 2013.
- The quality of teaching has improved because teachers are held to account much more rigorously for the progress their pupils make. In addition, the quality of training teachers receive while at the school has improved significantly. Teachers and teaching assistants work well as a team to share good practice and learn from each other.
- The care and support provided by staff at the school is of the highest quality. Pupils feel safe and their parents agree they are safe. The school works very well with other agencies to ensure all pupils are well cared for, healthy and ready to learn. The safeguarding and care of pupils is an outstanding feature of the school.
- Children are taught how to behave well from their first days in Nursery. All pupils move around the school calmly and show care for one another. Even the youngest pupils behave and socialise very well while eating their lunches. Pupils are confident and polite.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although the progress that the most able pupils make is improving, it is not quite as strong as other ability groups. Similarly, pupils' writing skills are not yet consistently strong.
- The progress pupils make in Year 1 is not as good as in other year groups.
- There is still some teaching that requires improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or part lessons. The inspectors listened to pupils read and observed a number of teaching assistants working with pupils.
- Meetings were held with pupils and teachers, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors spoke to many pupils during breaks, lunchtimes, and lessons.
- In the course of the inspection, inspectors took account of the 27 responses made by parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors observed school assembly and attended a choral singing workshop.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including reports, internal and external data about pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance records and pupils' work. They scrutinised safeguarding procedures and records.

Inspection team

Neil MacKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Hargreaves

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Marsden is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government 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.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and supported at school action is above average. The proportion of pupils assessed at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs, is significantly higher than average.
- Currently one teacher is on maternity leave and another is on long-term sick leave. During the inspection, one teacher was on short-term sick leave.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the achievement of the most able pupils and pupils in Year 1 so that it is at least consistently good.
- Continue to improve pupils writing so that they write as well as they read.
- Eradicate any teaching that is not yet good, particularly in Year 1, by using the existing good and outstanding practice within the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When beginning Nursery, children start with knowledge and skills which are well-below typical expectations of their age. As they progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage they make very strong progress in their learning. They start Year 1 a little below the levels expected for their age. Teaching in this class is not as good as in other classes and so pupils' progress slows. However, the good pace of improvement picks up again and across Years 2 to 6. Since the last inspection, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has improved and achievement overall is at least good.
- In classes that are taught by permanent teaching staff, pupils progress particularly well and sometimes make outstanding progress. The progress pupils make in classes that are taught by temporary staff is not as strong. Due to good leadership, guidance and very good support from teaching assistants, progress in these classes is often, although not consistently, good.
- By the end of Year 1, pupils' knowledge and use of the sounds letters make (phonics) is in line with other pupils nationally because this aspect is particularly well taught throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and good use is made of a very clear and effective phonics programme in Year 1.
- Attainment in reading by the end of Year 6 has usually been at least in line with national figures; however, there was a dip in 2013. Currently, teachers and other adults encourage pupils to read for pleasure and many pupils speak about their love of reading. Consequently, pupils read well. Attainment in writing has always been slightly lower than reading. Senior leaders are aware of this, and are working hard to improve pupils' writing. Writing for current pupils in the school is improving more rapidly than in the past.
- Achievement in mathematics was identified in the last inspection report as an area for improvement. The school has worked hard on this, and last year progress in mathematics was very good. Pupils continue to make strong progress in mathematics.
- Pupils' basic skills, including information and communication technology, are developed well through interesting projects in a range of subjects, including science, geography, history and French. Pupils achieve as well across these subjects as they do in English and mathematics.
- There was no gap in attainment or rates of progress between those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other pupils last year. This very positive aspect of the school's work continues for current pupils. The improvement has been brought about through careful use of the pupil premium funding enabling the school to monitor the progress of these pupils accurately and provide effective additional support for their learning, care and guidance when required.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is at least as good as other pupils in the school. Teachers spot pupils who have a potential special educational need very early. The school then makes effective use of external agencies and other professionals to identify the pupil's specific need and devise suitable teaching and care strategies.
- Since the last inspection, the progress of the most able pupils has improved, although it is not yet quite as strong as other ability groups. This improvement is continuing because all teachers are aware of this slight discrepancy and make a conscious effort to ensure that the most able achieve well.
- Pupils have equal opportunities to learn well in school because no groups of pupils are disadvantaged.

The quality of teaching is good

- Permanent teaching staff have improved quickly as a result of very good and well organised training. The work of teachers is closely monitored by the headteacher and, as a result, she can identify the significant strengths that many teachers have. The headteacher is then able to use this expertise to develop all staff. Teachers learn from each other and a strong culture of

support has evolved. The school has also made use of good support from the local authority in helping teachers develop skills in assessment and teaching mathematics.

- When teachers plan good lessons, pupils make good or outstanding progress. These teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. They consider carefully the needs of different groups of pupils in their class and adapt activities to suit these different needs. Consequently, the most able make as good progress as other groups. These teachers use carefully considered questions that both help the teacher understand how well the children are learning, and also help pupils think more deeply about what they are learning. They take every opportunity to help pupils develop their writing and reading skills. Teachers choose interesting topics and a variety of activities which help pupils enjoy their learning.
- When teaching does not lead to good progress, teachers do not think through their lessons well enough. They tend to plan activities without giving enough attention to thinking how best to help pupils learn. So pupils do lots of work, but it does not always challenge the pupils and help them learn new things. This contributes to the slightly slower progress of the most able. Another factor that slows progress is weak questioning skills. A few teachers ask questions that only require shallow, one word answers. They rely too heavily on the 'hands up' style of questioning, which allows some pupils' attention to drift, sit quietly and not get noticed. This is particularly noticeable in Year 1.
- Generally, pupils' work is marked regularly and often. There is some variability in the benefit pupils get from having their work marked. Pupils in Year 4 know exactly what they have done well and how to improve. The teacher ensures pupils understand this advice and that they take notice of it. This teacher knows in detail what every child in the class needs to do to improve, across all subjects. In other classes, work is ticked and encouraging or congratulatory comments are made. While this celebrates pupils' successes it does not enable pupils to think about their own improvement.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is an exciting place to be for children. They learn quickly through a wonderful range of activities. Despite many children starting in the Nursery with development in communication and social skills which are well below expectations for their age, routines are quickly established. Children know what is expected of them and thrive in this secure and stimulating environment. This team of adults are very successful in what they do because they are experienced, work hard, enjoy their work but, above all, want to do the best they can for these children.
- Throughout the school, teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those pupils who are disabled and those with special education needs. They receive good training and work well with teachers.
- Homework is used well by teachers to improve pupils' basic skills. It is set regularly and parents are rightly expected to play their part by working with their children to support them in their learning. Recent investments made on online learning systems have added significantly to the benefit of homework. Pupils can read books and then follow guided learning on the computer. They can assess themselves and improve their own work. Parents can more easily work with their children on school topics and they, and school staff, can easily monitor the progress of pupils' work. Homework club is an excellent opportunity for some pupils to get help from school staff and, if needed, access computers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Expectations about how pupils should behave are high. They move around the school confidently and are happy because they feel secure. Even the youngest children behave well. Pupils are polite, courteous and enjoy each other's company. Pupils say there is little bullying and, when it does happen, incidents are minor and are dealt with well. They understand different reasons for bullying, including those based on prejudice. A small number of parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) raised concerns about bullying and behaviour generally. As a result of this, inspectors investigated bullying and behaviour in more detail including talking to

parents when they brought their children to school. These parents felt very strongly that behaviour was good and that there were no bullying problems in the school because teachers 'nip anything like that in the bud'. Inspectors confirm that overtime, behaviour is good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning and this can be seen in the care and pride they take in their work.

- Pupils attend well and the number of pupils whose attendance is particularly poor is dropping quickly because school staff work diligently with parents to ensure they are aware of the importance of their children attending school every day. Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.
- Behaviour is not outstanding however, because in some classes teachers have to make several attempts to get the pupils to settle and listen. In these lessons, the strategies teachers use to control behaviour are not as effective as they should be; this is most evident in Years 1 and 5.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- All pupils and their circumstances are well known to staff who care deeply about their well-being. This may take the form of the headteacher simply combing a pupil's hair to calm her, to enlisting agencies and professionals such as educational psychologists or parental support teams.
- During the inspection, discussions with pupils illustrated their understanding of how to stay safe both in school and in the community. They have, in their own way, an appropriate awareness of potential dangers they may come across, including when online, from substances and strangers. They can explain how they would deal with difficult situations.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides an excellent role model for the staff and, in this school, one has a real sense of adults with high expectations, working very well together and enjoying what they do. All staff, and the headteacher in particular, have worked hard and very effectively since the last inspection to improve the quality of teaching and the achievements of pupils. The work of other leaders in the school is good. The highly effective Early Years Foundation Stage is particularly well led.
- The checks made on the quality of the school's work are done very accurately and so the headteacher is able to precisely target effective improvements. This close monitoring also helps school leaders to suitably reward teachers through pay progression, for their good work.
- The headteacher has managed the difficult circumstances of having a relatively high number of temporary staff well, and has limited to a minimum any potential negative effect on pupils' progress, by ensuring these teachers have additional good support and guidance.
- Pupils are well served by a good curriculum. Teachers usually choose interesting topics and activities which help pupils enjoy their learning. They broaden pupils' horizons by choosing topics that enable them to learn about other cultures.
- There is an increasing range of additional clubs, visits and events that the pupils thoroughly enjoy and gain benefit from. Sports and games have improved recently through the well spent additional primary school sport funding. Trips are planned that will support pupils' learning and provide them with good opportunities for personal development. Pupils have ample opportunity to develop musical skills. They all learn a musical instrument in Year 4 and percussion in Year 6. During the inspection and based in the school, there was an excellent half-day choral singing workshop for Year 5 pupils in this and three other local schools. Pupils were inspired and their spirits lifted by listening to six choristers from Durham Cathedral School sing and talk about their lives. Then the pupils themselves discovered the pleasure in singing en masse with the older girls.
- High expectations and a wealth of valuable opportunities, ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong.
- Since the previous inspection, the local authority has provided good support for the school and made a good contribution in helping the school to improve. It has recently recognised the

school's improvement and has reduced its level of support.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is effective and governors have a clear knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school because they work closely with the headteacher and other staff. Like the staff, they are ambitious for this school to improve. Governors hold the headteacher, and by extension the whole staff, rigorously to account for the school's performance and in particular for the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They understand how good teaching is rewarded and any underperformance is addressed, and governors analyse rigorously comparative data about pupils' performance.
- They ensure financial probity and that safeguarding procedures comply with legislation.
- The governors have a clear understanding on how effectively additional funding is spent, including that to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium and the primary school sport funding.

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	108687
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	430934

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	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Parkes
Headteacher	Ann Bell
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2012
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