

Easington Lane Primary School

High Street, Easington Lane, Houghton-le-Spring, Tyne and Wear, DH5 0JT

Inspection dates 25–26 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Children develop well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It provides a good basis to their school life and for future learning.
- The standards pupils reached in Key Stage 1 last year were the highest in the school in four years. Pupils build on the good learning skills established in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to achieve well and reach national-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics from their individual and frequently low starting points.
- All pupil groups make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics, including the most able and those with a disability or special educational needs.
- Teaching is usually good and there is some outstanding teaching.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and their attitudes to learning are positive. They respond well to their teachers and to the other adults who work in the school.
- The headteacher provides strong and focused leadership. She shares with the senior leaders and governors a strong commitment to ensuring pupils do the very best that they can. There is a strong and clear drive to continually improve the school and this can be seen in the fact that pupils are doing better now than in previous years.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding and a small proportion requires improvement. Teachers do not always make effective use of support staff.
- Some teaching assistants are not as skilled as others in supporting the learning needs of all pupil groups.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed nine lessons as well as other learning activities such as focused additional support sessions. Two lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors listened to pupils from different year groups reading, and talked with them and other groups of pupils about their learning and school life.
- Meetings were held with parents, a group of headteachers working in partnership with the school, the school’s headteacher, senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and scrutinised documentation relating to pupils’ progress and to school management, including safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspectors took account of a recent parent survey and spoke to a number of parents during the inspection. There were no responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View). They also took account of the 30 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Michele Crichton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Colin Scott	Additional Inspector
Anne Humble	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Easington Lane is an average-sized primary school serving a former mining community to the south-west of Sunderland.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and a small proportion is from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is much higher than average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for 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 school has the Artsmark, International School, Enhanced Healthy Schools and Foundation Stage positive behaviour charter mark accreditations.
- The school extends its services in that it provides a breakfast club.
- There is an on-site nursery called Little Legs, which is inspected independently and was not part of this inspection.
- There have been changes to the leadership team and to governors, including a new Chair of the Governing Body, since the last inspection.
- 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?

- Raise the standards that pupils reach by:
 - ensuring all teaching is at least good and more of it is outstanding
 - ensuring teachers always make effective use of support assistants throughout the whole of each lesson
 - ensuring all teaching assistants have the necessary skills and know what to do to help all pupils in all classes and not just in small-group and one-to-one situations.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Nursery class with skills that are well below those usually expected for their age, particularly in communication and personal and social development. Across the Nursery and Reception classes, children make good progress because staff know their needs and effective skills for learning, such as good listening, are developed well. However, the majority of children enter Year 1 with standards that are still below those expected for their age.
- Pupils make good progress across both Key Stages 1 and 2 from their individual starting points. Standards at Key Stage 1 improved considerably in 2013 and, for the first time in four years, they were in line with national averages for reading, writing and mathematics. Standards at Key Stage 2 matched national averages but from pupils' very low starting points, this represents good progress.
- In reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2, pupils consistently make the progress expected of them but in 2013, a greater number of pupils exceeded this. This was especially so in writing, where the number of pupils achieving more than the expected progress was 20% above national figures.
- A staff focus to improve reading throughout the school has been very successful. Pupils enjoy reading and staff ensure there are many opportunities to read for different purposes every day. Consequently, the number of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 check on phonics (the sounds that letters make) was 20% above the national average in 2013. This shows a marked improvement from the previous year, when this figure was about the same as the national average.
- Year 6 pupils in 2013 also did well in the assessment of spelling, punctuation and grammar, which was even better than the year before. This year group also achieved 20% above the national average in 2013.
- The most able pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Due to the low starting points of many pupils, the proportion that reaches the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is below average. However, the school is building on the successes from 2013, and this year there are pupils currently on track to achieve the higher Level 3 in Year 2 and the highest Level 6 in Year 6.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding reach standards and make progress that are similar to those of their peers in the school in reading, writing and mathematics. They achieve better than national averages in reading and writing and are marginally behind in mathematics. This is because of specific and well-chosen support which ensures there are no significant gaps in knowledge between these pupils and their classmates. This demonstrates the school's commitment to ensuring every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also benefit from specific and focused high-quality support from small-group work with teachers and support assistants. This ensures that these pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their individual starting points, especially in reading.

The quality of teaching is good

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Teaching and support staff are highly skilled at developing, for example, children's speaking and listening skills. The work in children's books, known as 'learning journeys', clearly demonstrates the good progress they make.
- The log of teaching observations held by senior leaders shows that teaching over time is predominantly good, with increasing examples of outstanding teaching, but a small minority which requires improvement. Observations, including those jointly made with the headteacher,

largely match this picture.

- A variety of activities are used successfully to enable each pupil to make their own best progress. For example, some pupils work in mixed-aged groups and some pupils work one-to-one with an adult for highly tailored support. Such activities, along with the consistent use of the school's reward system, good use of information and communication technology (ICT) and very positive relationships, mean that all groups of pupils achieve well.
- Where pupils learn well, well-chosen activities and equipment inspire pupils to work hard and do well. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of all staff. Teachers and support staff work well together as a team and their efforts result in at least good progress for all groups of pupils.
- Occasionally, teaching requires improvement because teachers do not always ensure support assistants are used effectively to help pupils throughout the whole of the lesson. Teaching assistants who are charged with providing specific and focused help for pupils with a range of learning needs, including the most able and those with a disability or special educational needs, deliver high-quality support. However, occasionally, some teaching assistants do not have the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to support all pupil groups well enough.
- A wide range of good questioning techniques is used to ensure pupils understand what they are learning and to make pupils, especially the most able, consider whether their answers are good enough. However, questioning is not always as probing as this. Staff ensure the most able pupils make at least good progress because each pupil has their own 'Challenge Plan' which identifies the specific areas that need to be worked upon.
- The curriculum is good and has a positive effect on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils benefit from a wide range of visits out to museums, places of interest, and from visitors who come into the school and make their writing activities interesting. For example, a local historian meets regularly with pupils to discuss the rich local heritage of the former mining community.
- Reading is taught well, and there is a good focus on improving writing skills to match the good levels of reading in the school – for example, by pupils regularly completing written reports on the books they have read.
- Mathematics is frequently of a practical nature and engages pupils well. Expectations of all pupils are high. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils learned about perimeter and areas of rectangles by working in the playground and then returned to their classroom to discuss and apply their findings to challenging tasks.
- Work in pupils' books reflects clearly their overall good progress. Work is regularly marked and shows a wide variety of activities to develop pupils' skills. In all subjects and key stages, the marking of pupils' work sets out what pupils need to do next in their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Throughout the inspection, nothing less than consistently good behaviour was seen in lessons, around the school and on the playground. A calm and purposeful atmosphere pervades the school. Pupils say that this is usual in their school.
- Pupils are well supervised in all areas of the school including at lunchtime, playtime, during breakfast club and after-school clubs. The strong and positive relationships between pupils and all adults are a very noticeable feature throughout the school.
- The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school. Several parents told inspectors that they recognise that their children are making good progress in their learning and that support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is 'amazing'. One parent commented, 'Staff frequently go above and beyond to support my child.'
- Attendance is now improving and is close to national-average figures. There was a dip in last year's attendance brought about by a norovirus outbreak in school, the persistent absence of some pupils and also because parents were taking children on holiday during school time. In response, the school now works closely with an attendance consultant and holidays in school

time are no longer authorised. This is proving to be successful, with only two children who are still persistently absent compared to 31 children last year.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school promotes healthy lifestyles well. Pupils know how to stay healthy and the importance of regular exercise and a balanced diet is supported, for example, by active and enjoyable 'Fit for Fun' sessions after school.
- Bullying in any form is not tolerated. The pupils themselves have contributed to the rules about behaviour in the school and they feel safe. They are confident that adults will look after them well if they ever have any concerns.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is a dynamic and driving force in the school. Since the last inspection and together with the governing body, she has honed and developed a new leadership team, including middle leaders, within the school with a single-minded approach to improving the school. For example, they have developed partnerships with local schools to provide opportunities for staff to improve their skills in teaching.
- Areas for improvement since the last inspection have all been addressed. The tracking and recording of information on pupils' achievement is extensive and shared well among staff. The information on different groups of pupils is comprehensive and easy to understand for all staff and governors.
- Staff performance management procedures are thorough and rigorous. Checks on the quality of teaching are linked to the targets set for each teacher. Progression on the pay scale is closely linked to meeting these targets.
- The curriculum is good and pupils are given a wide range of enrichment opportunities through visits and visitors.
- The primary school sport funding has been used to buy the services from the Sunderland Consortium, which provides the school with specialist training for the teachers. It also provides a specialist coach who takes sports lessons in conjunction with the teachers. This is developing teachers' skills in delivering lessons as well as increasing pupils' participation in different sports, including opportunities for competitive events.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for this good school. The local authority representative meets with the headteacher regularly and has provided training for the governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are ambitious for the school and want it to be the best it can be. Consequently, they rigorously challenge the headteacher and staff on all aspects of the school. They have a completely accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, the quality of teaching in the school and the impact of any additional funding the school receives. This is because governors critically analyse any information presented to them and members seek for themselves a clear picture of how pupils are doing by making regular visits into school and by talking to pupils, staff and parents. They ensure that staff, including the headteacher, meet their targets before considering any recommendations for pay awards. Governors are diligent in assessing the effectiveness of the use of funding, including that for sports and the pupil premium funding, and are happy with the results. They are also pleased with the good improvement in attendance and the success of focused support programmes, especially for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Governors fully meet their statutory duties, including that of safeguarding.

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	108795
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	440799

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	257
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Trevitt
Headteacher	Sarah Nordstrom
Date of previous school inspection	30 March 2011
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