

North Park Primary School

Bessemer Green, Spennymoor, County Durham, DL16 6PP

Inspection dates 1–2 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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.

- Pupils make good progress from starting points which are well below those typical for their age to achieve average standards by the time they leave Year 6.
- Teaching is good. Staff make learning interesting and show pupils what they need to learn. They understand the levels at which pupils are working and ensure that progress is good.
- Pupils work hard. They like their teachers and are eager and attentive learners. They recognise when they have achieved well and this encourages them to work even harder.
- Staff quickly recognise those pupils who find it difficult to engage in learning. They ensure that high quality extra support is put in place so that these pupils also make good progress.
- Pupils love their school. They are happy, safe and behave well. Parents support their views. They hold the staff in high esteem for the care they provide for their children. Any concerns are quickly and successfully addressed.
- The drive to improve the school since the previous inspection has been very effective. The inspirational headteacher, supported by strong senior leaders, has improved teaching and the achievement of pupils considerably in a short time.
- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and where there are weaknesses. Actions plans are detailed and close working relationships with staff make sure that identified improvements are successful.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment in writing, although average, is below that in reading and mathematics, especially for boys.
- Work provided does not always challenge pupils of different abilities well enough, especially the most able pupils in writing.
- There are too few opportunities to use writing and mathematics skills in other subjects.
- Occasionally, there are not enough tasks which challenge pupils to question and think for themselves using their skills in English and mathematics.
- For some pupils, there are few opportunities to return to past work and correct errors and so learn from their mistakes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 14 lessons or parts of lessons. In addition they made a number of short visits to the work in small groups and listened to reading. The headteacher took part in a joint observation with the lead inspector.
- Separate discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The opinions of 12 members of staff were also considered from their questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books and children's learning journals. They considered staff planning journals, data on children's progress, planning and monitoring documentation and information relating to the welfare of children and safeguarding.
- There were insufficient responses to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View. Therefore, inspectors took account of the results of the school's own questionnaire to parents and discussions with parents.
- Inspectors observed pupils during morning playtime and lunchtime, and attended an assembly.

Inspection team

Kate Pringle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graeme Clarke

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an 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 and those children in local authority care, is well above average.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the governments' current floor standards, which are the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils each morning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to be outstanding and to make sure that progress is at least consistently good, especially in writing by:
 - making sure that tasks are always hard enough for the most able pupils and capture the enthusiasm of boys
 - creating more activities for pupils to use their skills in writing and mathematics in other subjects to the same level as expected in English and mathematics lessons
 - sharpening teachers' recognition of how well pupils are learning in lessons to change tasks to meet needs
 - inspiring pupils to question and solve problems which encourage them to question and think more for themselves
 - ensuring that pupils return to past work and respond to teachers' comments and make corrections to increase their learning and progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter Nursery with skills well below those typical for their age. They quickly gain in confidence and make good progress, although attainment is still below average when they leave the Reception class.
- The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) is effective. Results of the Year 1 screening check in phonics are in line with the national average. Children carefully sound out words using their understanding of the sounds made by letters and blends of letters. This helps pupils make good progress in reading.
- Standards by the end of Year 2 are much improved because of the impact of good teaching. Pupils now achieve in line with what is expected for their age in all subjects. Progress from their starting points in Year 1 is good. However, achievement in writing is lower than in reading and mathematics and boys' performance is lower than that of girls.
- Over Key Stage 2 pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Standards are average in reading, writing and mathematics which reflect good progress from their national assessments in Year 2. However, achievement in writing is lower, with boys' performance somewhat below that of girls. Information for the present Year 6 indicates that although attainment will not be as high in 2014, this is linked to the ability of this cohort and evidence shows progress continues to be at least good.
- The focus on teaching reading has improved achievement, especially at Key Stage 1. Pupils now tackle new words confidently. Older pupils use their skills for research, as well as reading for pleasure. Mathematics is taught well and pupils are growing in confidence to use their skills to solve problems.
- Progress in writing is good, but varies between years. Attainment at the end of both key stages, although average, is slightly lower than in other subjects. Teaching ensures that pupils improve their basic skills and write in different styles. However, the most able pupils are not always given hard enough work to write more imaginatively and reach higher levels. Boys are not always enthused enough about writing to make as much progress as possible.
- The progress of the most able pupils from their starting points is good by the time they leave school, with more reaching above average levels in reading and mathematics. However, progress is variable and especially in writing when expectations are not high enough.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make good and often better progress. Their standards in all subjects are higher compared to this group nationally. Within school, standards are just lower than for other pupils and the gap is reducing year on year. This is also true of these pupils at Year 2. Funding allocated to support these pupils has been spent wisely, especially to support the development of reading skills.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good from their individual starting points. Individual needs are met well by a wealth of carefully focused individual and group tasks.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good. Pupils enjoy learning. They listen carefully and work hard to achieve what their teachers ask of them. They respond very well to questions, carefully considering their answers. Some teachers make are effective in helping pupils to share their ideas and listen to different opinions. Books are presented neatly and pupils take pride in their work.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children settle quickly and show confidence as they learn. At first, much learning concentrates upon developing speaking and listening skills and developing children's personal and social skills. Staff understand the emotional and welfare needs well and show considerable care for children. A good range of activities develops children's curiosity and

encourages investigation. The access to high quality gymnastic and swimming teaching increases children's physical abilities and contributes to their self-esteem.

- Pupils are eager to learn. For example, when learning how writing conveys the feelings of characters, pupils considered how words, actions and expressions gave clues to the reader. They explored the use of words and extended their vocabulary as they considered how their writing could demonstrate different emotions.
- Tasks usually challenge and match closely pupils' different needs. This is not always the case for the most able pupils especially in writing, but also at times in mathematics, when tasks are not always hard enough or linked to what pupils need to learn next and pupils do not progress quickly.
- In some subjects there are too few opportunities for pupils to be creative, to investigate and solve problems by applying their knowledge and skills. In writing, the enthusiasm of boys is not always captured and some do not try hard to produce their best work.
- Teachers do not always recognise when pupils understand fully and are ready to move to the next step in learning. This means that some pupils continue working at what they can already achieve, rather than moving on at a faster rate. This is especially true for the most able pupils.
- At present, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use their skills of writing and mathematics in other subjects. This limits opportunities to extend their learning and investigate problems in a range of activities.
- Books are marked regularly. Comments share successes with pupils indicating how to improve work and what to learn next. This works well when pupils respond to teachers' comments. They correct errors or misunderstandings, seeing where they have gone wrong and use this to make better progress. Where this is not the case, pupils do not learn from their mistakes and are less clear about how to improve.
- Teaching assistants are trained well and have good relationships with pupils. They work closely with teachers to provide additional support and contribute to the success of those with specific needs both within, and outside of, the classroom. Their work with those who find learning more difficult is particularly effective.
- The school's parental survey and parents spoken to during inspection, believe that teaching is good and children make good progress. They know that pupils are well prepared, socially and academically, for their move to secondary school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- This is a harmonious and inclusive school where pupils are encouraged to be thoughtful and to care for each other. They carefully consider how their actions may affect their friends.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are very happy in school and enjoy their day as they work and play with friends. They say that school is safe and if they have concerns, there is always someone to share their problems. Parents value the high level of care provided by staff with whom they have good relationships.
- Pupils recognise different dangers and are taught to be responsible and make sensible choices. They are aware of the hazards they might meet and how to deal with them.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have a good grasp of the code of behaviour which is consistently applied by all staff. Pupils believe that behaviour is good but that, at times, some pupils can misbehave. Pupils try hard in lessons and are well focused as they work on shared tasks. Occasionally, when interest levels fall, some pupils become distracted.
- Pupils move about the school sensibly. They are polite and well-mannered to staff and visitors. Different responsibilities for pupils to act as buddies, sports leaders and on the school council create a sense of worth, increasing pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They say that bullying can occur occasionally, but strongly believe that such instances are few. Pupils know that staff very quickly pick up on any instances and deal with such these firmly and effectively.
- Attendance has been a little variable recently due to viral infections, but is average overall. Most

absence is due to illness and the vast majority of pupils get to school on time. The highly successful breakfast club is well attended.

- There have been some fixed-term exclusions over the past three years. School has very good and honest relationships with parents with whom they work closely to support such pupils to address their needs.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders, teachers and governors have worked successfully to resolve identified concerns. The headteacher has been inspirational in her relentless drive to improve teaching and raise standards. She recognises and values the particular skills of all staff and makes best use of them to move the school forward.
- Senior leaders and managers have a good understanding of where the strengths and weaknesses of the school lie. Areas to improve are clearly identified in a well-focused development plan, together with how these are to be achieved. Continual review by leaders of information about pupils' progress, teaching observations and book reviews identify successes and redirect development when needed.
- Middle leaders demonstrate effective management of their responsibilities. They identify how actions for improvement have made an impact upon teaching which, in turn, has assured pupils' good progress. Recent work to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage, phonics, reading and Key Stage 1 have all been successful.
- Senior leaders regularly check teaching. They identify weaknesses and provide support through focused training. Although there can be lower levels of challenge for most able pupils and in writing, especially for boys, leaders are well aware of this and are already working to develop these areas. There is clear commitment to equal opportunities for all pupils and any form of discrimination is not tolerated.
- For every teacher, the quality of their teaching is linked to the progress pupils make in their class, and this is then reflected in any pay award. This process is rigorous and there are firm expectations of staff to meet required levels.
- The good curriculum is well balanced and includes many exciting opportunities. Subject leaders are presently working to introduce a new curriculum in September 2014, which will make better links between subjects. Currently, basic literacy and numeracy skills are not fully extended in other subjects. Pupils make a variety of visits to learn about different places and times, with residential stays at an outdoor centre and to France. Visitors, including specialist coaches, successfully extend pupils' experiences through sport and music.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development forms the hub of this successful school. The accent upon 'respecting rights' is reflected in pupils' good behaviour and their care for each other. Many opportunities recognise and celebrate different religions and cultures, both locally and in other countries. Links in the local community are particularly strong and pupils have specific roles to play through their local church.
- The pupil premium and primary school sport funding are carefully allocated to enhance learning and encourage physical activity. Leaders monitor the impact of improving pupils' general fitness, the increased uptake in sports and developing pupils' performance. Teachers' skills in the teaching of physical education are enhanced by trained coaches and are monitored by the physical education leader.
- The relationship between the school and the local authority is excellent. Considerable support, particularly for the Early Years Foundation Stage, phonics, governors' training and raising the quality of teaching, has been effective. The school adviser recognises the determination to improve and how successfully the school has developed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Training has enhanced their skills and they carefully monitor actions in the development plan. They are now in a better position to challenge the school. Together with the headteacher they have been involved in

good appointments which have improved leadership. Governors know the quality of teaching and that actions have improved teaching to good. They monitor closely the impact of actions and are more adept at the analysis of data on achievement to compare this school with others. Governors know that progress is good across the different stages of the school.

- Governors manage finances carefully, including how staff are rewarded for their performance. Leaders are held to account for the spending of additional funding, such as the pupil premium and primary school sport funding, which are accounted for on the website. Safeguarding practices 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	132172
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	442279

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	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Foster
Headteacher	Patricia Monk
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2013
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