

Sherburn Village Primary School

Cookshold Lane, Sherburn Village, Durham, DH6 1DU

Inspection dates 13–14 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Rates of pupils' progress and achievement in all groups are too variable and not enough pupils exceed the expected levels of progress, especially in writing.
- The progress that pupils make acquiring the essential skills of blending letters and sounds together is not yet fast enough.
- Teaching is not consistently good, because planning does not take enough account of the range of pupils' abilities, needs and talents, using the assessment information available.
- Marking does not always make it crystal clear how pupils can improve their work.
- Leaders and managers do not always ensure that there is a relentless focus on raising pupils' achievement in all learning.
- Pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to practise their essential speech and language skills, including in their early reading and writing in the Reception class and Years 1 and 2.
- Over time, the checks made and the assessment of the impact of leaders' actions has not been rigorous or accurate enough.
- Since the previous inspection, governors have not always made certain they have enough first-hand, reliable evidence of school performance to challenge leaders and ensure that the school improves at a fast enough rate.

The school has the following strengths

- A supportive and caring staff provides a warm, happy environment in which all pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- In lessons, pupils behave well and are increasingly positive in their working habits. Relationships with staff are excellent.
- Pupils are well informed about risk and danger.
- Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in a wide range of school activities.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is now above average.
- The governing body have shown much vision and commitment bringing together the two village schools and retaining parent confidence.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 11 lessons, including one paired observation with the acting headteacher and work scrutiny carried out with the acting headteacher and special educational needs coordinator. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and undertook learning walks around the school in order to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils and had discussions with the headteacher, subject leaders, staff, parents, governors and the local authority education development adviser.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents including those related to safeguarding, self-review, the monitoring of staff performance, the school's improvement plan and records relating to pupils' progress and behaviour.
- The inspectors took account of 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 10 staff questionnaire responses.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Derek Sleightholme

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school, which is federated with Sherburn Hill Primary School just over one mile away. Both schools share the same headteacher and governing body.
- Almost all children are of White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- Currently, an average proportion of pupils is eligible for pupil premium funding. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school failed to meet the government's current floor standards in 2013, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school provides a breakfast club each day.
- Giant Steps Nursery is a privately run nursery located on the site, but is not managed by the governing body. It is subject to a separate inspection. Reports for this setting may be read at www.ofsted.gov.uk.
- The acting headteacher, who took up post in April 2014, has been appointed to the substantive post, commencing September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better, so that pupils make faster progress and consistent gains in achievement by:
 - raising expectations of what each pupil can achieve
 - ensuring that progress information accurately identifies what each pupil is capable of achieving and making sure tasks are well-matched to their abilities and talents
 - sharing best practice even more widely so that all learning is inspiring and challenging
 - improving teachers' marking so that pupils are given helpful feedback with well-defined steps for improvement.
- Improve pupils' achievement, particularly their writing by:
 - ensuring that pupils are encouraged to apply their skills in blending letters and sounds to make sense of words at a faster rate, in order to help them read fluently and write accurately
 - ensuring that pupils write at length more often and placing even more emphasis on spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - improving the accuracy and quality of layout and presentation of pupils' work in books.
- Improve leadership and management of the school, including the work of the governing body, by:
 - making certain that there is a relentless focus on pupils' rate of progress and achievement in all lessons
 - setting robust timescales, together with clear measurable targets, to accurately assess gains made and ensure that the rate of school improvement is faster
 - making sure that governors extend their skills to challenge the school more rigorously.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although the rate of pupils' progress is quickening, including in their writing, their achievement requires improvement because a consistent pattern of good achievement has yet to be reached and sustained.
- Children start the Reception class with skills below those typical for their age. Reading, writing and mathematical skills are often weak. Even though children settle quickly and make good progress in developing their social and emotional skills, not enough children achieve the skill levels expected for their age by the time that they enter Year 1.
- Although standards remain below those expected, last year's assessments at the end of Year 2 revealed an improvement on the previous years' low standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Improvements in the quality of teaching of early reading and writing are helping to raise pupils' standards, but their skills are not reinforced regularly and systematically enough to ensure a consistent pattern of fast progress.
- In the 2013 tests at the end of Year 6, untypically, pupils failed to meet government floor standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Currently, in Year 3 to Year 6, the rate of progress is quickening as essential improvements begin to have an impact. Current school information, confirmed by inspection evidence, points to attainment and progress that will exceed floor standards at the end of the current Year 6. In reading and mathematics, standards are on course to be broadly average, whilst in writing, standards are expected to be below average; this represents a big improvement on the exceptionally low standards in 2013 tests.
- The most able pupils are benefitting from increased opportunities to think deeply about problems, especially in mathematics. This is leading to a higher proportion than average being on course to reach the highest level in mathematics, but too few pupils are on track to reach the higher level in reading and writing. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make broadly similar progress to their classmates, although in individual cases, when support is consistently effective, progress is good.
- Pupil premium funding is used successfully. In the 2013 Year 6 tests, those eligible for support through the extra funding, including those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, achieved higher standards than their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics and in line with those pupils nationally. Despite their higher attainment at the end of Year 6, their progress through the school, as with other groups, is variable and requires improvement.
- The school works successfully to foster a love of reading and books. However, progress in acquiring fluency and accuracy in Years 1 and 2 is not fast enough, because the teaching of linking letters and sounds together to form words does not reinforce their skills effectively enough.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching ranges from that which requires improvement to good with occasional inspiring features. Elements of good practice are evident in all classes. Although teaching is improving, it is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils make the good progress they are undoubtedly capable of achieving in all subjects.
- Despite the often excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the good levels of staff commitment, not enough use is made of the available assessment information to ensure that learning is sufficiently shaped and matched to meet pupils' different abilities.
- When pupils' rate of progress is patchy and requires improvement:
 - expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are not high enough, such as in layout and presentation of work
 - the tasks that are planned are not always focused accurately enough on gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding

- questioning does not always check and test pupils' knowledge and understanding enough
- written feedback in pupils' books does not provide clear and concise guidance for improvement
- opportunities to reinforce and practise early reading and writing skills, such as blending letters and sounds together to make sense of words and writing at length, are missed.
- When pupils' achievement exceeds expected levels it is because:
 - staff set high expectations of what each pupil can achieve and to encourage pupils to think critically and make decisions
 - planning of the tasks takes into full account pupils' abilities, needs and interests
 - probing questions frequently check pupils' understanding and constantly stretch their thinking
 - marking is positive and helpful and ensures that pupils are in no doubt about exactly how to improve their work.
- A group of older pupils relished a challenging activity and were observed totally absorbed using personification to bring a poem to life. Increasingly, topic work provides interesting opportunities to write at length, such as when researching the history of the network of local railway lines and stations. Yet, this inspiring and challenging practice is not fully evident in all classes.
- Typically, marking is used effectively to provide praise and demonstrate to pupils what is correct or wrong. Pupils are expected to do the corrections in their work, but challenging guidance for improvement is in most cases too variable.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in classrooms, at break and lunchtimes. Corridors and playgrounds are friendly, happy places to be. The exceedingly happy, family atmosphere in the breakfast club sets a very positive tone for the day. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development encourages considerate and caring relationships.
- In conversations with pupils they report that, 'everyone does the right thing' when responding to questions about behaviour in school. Pupils are well informed about bullying in its various forms. They report that staff are never far away and that, 'pupils are never afraid to tell an adult' if they have a worry or concern. As a result, any issues are quickly resolved by staff. School records confirm this picture.
- The school's work to make sure pupils are safe and secure is good. All parents agree. Pupils are well informed of risks and dangers. Pupils talked animatedly about a recent safety seminar when they had to investigate a mock-up car crash scene. In the playground although play is active and lively, pupils are sensible and safety conscious. All happily join in and respond positively to any staff guidance.
- Pupils whose needs are complex or whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are skilfully and thoughtfully managed. Consequently, all pupils, regardless of their starting point, confidently join in all activities and achieve success.
- Pupils are polite, considerate and helpful. They thrive on the responsibilities that they are given, such as acting as buddies in the playground. They display much pride in the achievements of their school. Attendance has improved in the last three terms and is now above average. Persistent absence is lower than average. This reflects the school's concerted drive and successful work with sometimes hard-to-reach families.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement, because it is too soon to confirm that the recent improvements in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are sustained.
- The acting headteacher has only been in post three weeks and has a large teaching commitment. In this short time, she has begun to successfully re-energise staff, very much aware of the areas of the school that require improvement. School improvement planning

contains the correct priorities, although timescales and measures of improvement are not yet clear enough.

- Checks on the quality of teaching have not been challenging, rigorous or accurate enough since the previous inspection to ensure a consistent and sustained rate of improvement. Senior leaders are conscious that best practice is not always shared widely enough and that the focus on raising achievement is not always relentless enough in all pupils' learning.
- Checking systems provide ample amounts of information about pupils' progress. Nevertheless, the analysis of the information requires sharpening to ensure that all staff have an accurate view of each pupil's progress and achievement, and whether the actions taken to improve the quality of their learning are successful.
- The subject leaders are increasingly confident and skilled, picking out what aspects of their subject areas require attention. They are committed and share the same ambitions as the acting headteacher. Staff training is in hand, distinctly focused upon increasing their expertise and effectiveness in driving and sustaining improvement.
- What is taught is varied and interesting and includes a wide variety of opportunities to be involved in art, music and sport. It supports the pupils' personal development and their well-being especially effectively. Funding allocated to support primary school sport is used successfully. Specialist coaching is encouraging high levels of pupils' participation and enabling them to acquire new skills, foster confidence and boost their enjoyment.
- The use of the pupil premium is well managed. Consequently, support is efficiently arranged to ensure that any gaps between the attainment of those eligible pupils and others in the school have been closed by the end of Year 6.
- The local authority has been extremely supportive during the period of establishing the hard federation and the recent appointment of the new headteacher. Regular use is made by the school of local authority expertise for staff training. Nevertheless, now and then opportunities have been overlooked to challenge the school's performance and ensure that governors know which questions to ask.
- Safeguarding meets requirements. Procedures are clearly established and much best practice adopted in day-to-day working.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Recent changes in the composition and size of the governing body are making working more manageable and are ensuring that there is a better understanding of the body's role in challenging and holding the school to account. Currently, members are working conscientiously to eradicate past shortcomings. Too often, governors have accepted the school's view of its performance without question, not understanding fully the consequences in relation to securing improvements in the level of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Governors are well informed about performance management, although the link between performance and pay is not always robust enough. Governors are very aware of how pupil premium funding is spent and the impact it can have. There is a strong desire to move the school forward and, given appropriate training and support, the governing body has the capacity to ensure that the school improves quickly.

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	114127
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	439853

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	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ray Pye
Headteacher	Susan Cornforth
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2010
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