

# Larkspur Community Primary School

Beacon Lough East, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear , NE9 6SS

**Inspection dates** 24–25 September 2014

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Outstanding                 | 1        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Early years provision          |                      | Good                        | 2        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' learning and progress slows in lower Key Stage 2 because teachers' knowledge of pupils' learning and their needs is not accurate enough.
- Teaching and learning are not consistently good in all classes. Pupils are not always challenged to do their best and teachers' marking does not always help to improve pupils' work.

### The school has the following strengths

- Good leadership by the headteacher has seen improvements to teaching and more robust systems to track pupils' learning. These are accelerating pupils' progress well.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Rates of progress in 2013 are in line with national averages, except in reading where they exceed the national average. An increasing number of pupils make good progress, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Most teachers know pupils well, so learning is well matched to their needs. This helps pupils find success and enjoy their learning in lessons.
- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. They are well cared for and feel safe in school. Teaching is good.
- Pupils' good behaviour around the school, and their respect for each other, creates what they rightly describe as 'a happy, friendly school, where you are able to do your best'.
- Good pastoral care from all adults makes sure that pupils feel safe, and are safe in school. Parents overwhelmingly agree their children are safe.
- The curriculum is well planned to interest pupils and provide them with memorable learning experiences through visits, visitors and independent research. It fosters pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as giving a good understanding of their role in modern British society.
- Senior and middle leaders use their skills well to improve the school by improving teaching and accelerating pupils' progress. The team spirit among all staff is a strength of the school.
- Governors are well informed about teaching and learning in the school. They fully support the headteacher's ambitions for a good school, which is held in esteem by its community.

### Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, staff and pupils.
- The inspectors observed the school at work and looked at a range of documentation, including that relating to the school’s safeguarding policies and procedures, information about pupils’ progress and attainment, the school’s self-evaluation of its performance and the school development plan.
- Inspectors examined pupil’s work on display and in their exercise books from the previous year. They listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- There were 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), which gave overwhelming support to the school’s work. Inspectors also took account of 16 staff questionnaires that were returned.

### Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Fallon

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are considered to be disadvantaged is high.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs at school action is above average; the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2013, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been significant staffing changes since the school was last inspected. A new headteacher was appointed in 2012 and a new nursery teacher was appointed in 2013. In the current term, two further teachers have been appointed.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and pupils' progress in lower Key Stage 2 to at least good by:
  - supporting staff to make more accurate assessments of pupils' needs so that they know the range of levels to plan for in lessons
  - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve by monitoring pupils' recorded work and advising on ways to extend this
  - monitoring the effectiveness of teachers' marking and feedback to help pupils to improve the level at which they work.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is ambitious and determined in her drive to improve the school's performance and ensure that pupils in all classes make good progress. High staff turn-over since the previous inspection and past inaccuracies in the levelling of pupils' work, saw the school's performance decline as the headteacher took up post.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher has made astute evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has set the correct priorities for improvement.
- Leadership at all levels has been developed and the senior leadership team has been re-formed. This is accelerating school improvement through the implementation of new roles and responsibilities. For example, the mathematics leaders moved quickly to implement a new curriculum after a dip in performance in 2013. The result is that Year 6 performance in national tests rose steeply this year and standards are rising across the school.
- Other staff have welcomed new roles, and are convinced that senior leaders' ambition for a good school is achievable within a short timescale. Middle leaders effectively monitor the school's work and set a clear programme for improvement. The strong team ethos that is developing is giving teachers and teaching assistants the confidence to take on new challenges. Responses to staff questionnaires show that morale is uniformly high across the school.
- Staff performance is well managed, with clear targets and priorities. All staff understand their accountability for the progress that their pupils make.
- The curriculum is developing well to ensure that it provides plenty of opportunity for pupils to follow their interests and find out about their local heritage. Pupils are particularly pleased about the visits they make, and that learning in one subject can support learning in another, for example, by using their literacy and numeracy skills. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, because the school is determined to develop pupils' understanding and tolerance of other cultures and beliefs to prepare them for life in modern Britain. Pupils develop a strong sense of community and fairness and look to teachers to promote and lead on these values.
- Improvements to systems to check on pupils' progress, introduced by the headteacher, have had a strong impact on how well teachers understand pupils' needs. These systems identify where pupils need extra support or challenge and are improving rates of progress for pupils in all ability groups, though not consistently yet in all classes.
- The additional funding for sport has been allocated to increase coaching support for gymnastics and rowing which has increased uptake at after-school clubs. It has also been used to increase participation in inter-school competitions and tournaments, which is having a strong impact on pupils' interest in getting and staying fit.
- The school makes good links with parents and goes to some lengths to involve them in the life of the school and their children's learning. For example, Family Learning courses and Stay and Play help parents to see how well their children are doing and to learn how to support their learning at home. Those parents, who responded to the online questionnaire Parent View, were overwhelmingly supportive of the school.
- The school has worked closely with the local authority to make improvements to teaching and early years provision since the headteacher took up post.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are well informed about the school's performance, the quality of teaching and how additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used. They visit the school frequently to monitor its work, and they undertake training to maintain their effectiveness. For example, in monitoring the use of the pupil premium funding, to gauge its effectiveness. They have ensured improvements to teaching by holding teachers to account, only rewarding those who fully meet their targets.
  - Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Finances are well managed so that there are good levels of staffing and resources to support pupils' learning.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say that there is hardly any bullying, but there can be name calling if they fall out over games. The pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying. They know that staff take bullying very seriously and that it is dealt with very quickly. The school's comprehensive behaviour

records show that behaviour over time is good, and that there are rarely any serious behaviour incidents leading to exclusions.

- Pupils show good levels of enthusiasm for learning, even during those activities where they have to listen to over-lengthy explanations. They work well together in pairs, and often accelerate each other's learning through this.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know where to go for help. They have been well taught to keep safe by being made aware, for example, of stranger danger and the risks of the internet.
- Pupils are aware of their rights and of those of others, through their learning in a Rights Respecting School. They show consideration and care for others and willingly take a lead in offering help. Levels of respect are high, as seen when pupils automatically give way to adults and the youngest children in corridors. A telling example was an older pupil excusing himself in a conversation with an inspector to help a teacher carry games equipment outside. This kind of respect and consideration for others abounds across the school.
- The school's work with pupils' families ensures that they feel well supported and have somewhere to turn for help with their children's learning. The headteacher's determination to get children into school so that they do not miss out on learning has seen attendance rise to average and persistent absence reduce since her arrival.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The headteacher has worked closely with the local authority to provide high quality training for teachers and teaching assistants. These improvements are beginning to improve rates of learning in most parts of the school.
- While there is much teaching that is good, and some occasionally outstanding, there is still a proportion that requires improvement, because not all pupils are making consistently good progress. This is evident in the progress of pupils in lower Key Stage 2, where work in books from last year shows pupils have not made enough progress from the end of Year 2 in their writing and mathematical skills.
- Where progress is inconsistent over time, as seen in pupils' books, it is often linked to too little time spent on new topics for pupils to fully understand and consolidate new learning. This slows pupils' progress because they are not able to quickly recall important concepts or skills when working on their own, so not enough learning is recorded.
- On those occasions where pupils' progress is slower than expected, it is sometimes because marking does not make clear the most significant things a pupil needs to do to improve. Sometimes pupils are given too many things to correct, or they do not have time allocated to make their corrections and learn from their mistakes. However, in the majority of classes, marking carefully shows pupils where they have gone wrong and how to put it right. In these classes, progress accelerates.
- Pupils make good progress where tasks are planned that match their abilities well. Careful planning based on a good knowledge of pupils' learning led to good progress for all groups of pupils in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on equivalent fractions, because all were working at the right level of difficulty to stretch their learning without becoming confused. In some classes, there is a lack of challenge for one or more groups of pupils because the teachers have not made an accurate assessment of the level at which they are working.
- Teaching assistants use their skills well to support pupils' learning in and out of the classroom. As teachers' measurement of pupils' progress becomes more accurate, the impact of these interventions is increasing.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- In 2013, the proportion of pupils that reached the expected standard in phonics (the sounds that letters make) was below the national average. Continued improvements to phonics teaching have seen a strong improvement in this year's figures.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils make expected progress in their reading, writing and mathematics skills. Recent changes to the mathematics curriculum are helping more pupils to reach the expected standard, so that their attainment in mathematics now matches that in reading and is above that in writing.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils' performance is close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents expected progress in Key Stage 2 for the majority of pupils from their

starting points at the end of Year 2. However, there is evidence in pupils' books that progress slows in the lower stages of Key Stage 2, and accelerates rapidly in Year 5 and 6. The school is aware of this pattern and has support plans in hand to ensure consistently good progress for the younger juniors.

- Pupils' reading skills are improving well and they improve rapidly in the older classes where a strong focus on independent reading allows pupils to progress at their own best rate. The school monitors the impact of the reading scheme closely, and has recognised that a wider range of reading materials is needed so pupils are tempted to read more widely and develop a love of reading.
- Pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics has risen well in the last year in response to training for staff linked to the introduction of a new curriculum. Staff have a better understanding of how topics are taught and are more able to set the right level of challenge for different groups. Pupils' knowledge of number and understanding of how to calculate by different methods is improving strongly as a result of these developments.
- The school has recognised that pupils' performance in writing is not as strong as it is in reading and mathematics. While pupils are able to read independently, their knowledge of spelling is not good, so that sometimes they spend too much time trying to spell words so other skills do not develop as quickly as in reading and mathematics. The school is currently introducing a regular spelling programme for pupils in Year 3 to Year 6.
- The most able pupils are increasingly well challenged as teachers make more accurate assessments of their learning and use these to set more challenging work. Work in pupils' books in Year 5 and 6 shows that the numbers reaching higher levels in writing and mathematics is increasing.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are supported to make similar progress to their peers and in some cases exceed this. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely to plan tasks that enable them to succeed and develop confidence in their learning.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to ensure that the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others is reducing and that they make similar progress to other pupils. In 2013, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was about one and half terms behind other pupils in the cohort and all pupils nationally. Since the headteacher took up post, the gap in rates of progress between these groups has reduced significantly.

### The early years provision

is good

- Children join the nursery with skills that are below those typical of three year-olds. They make good progress from their starting points, especially in developing confidence and becoming learners who dare to explore the environment and find out for themselves. By the end of the Reception Year, the majority have developed the key skills to make a good start in Year 1.
- Planning for children's learning covers the seven areas of learning well to provide interesting and challenging experiences that meet the children's needs. Teaching is good. Adults intervene to prompt and support children to develop their thinking or explore new ways of doing things. A good example was when Reception children were challenged by the teacher to count where the train stopped on the track. They thoroughly enjoyed counting the blocks and improved their number recognition at the same time.
- Robust systems to keep children safe are regularly reviewed and kept up to date in the changing environment. Children's good behaviour and willingness to join in reflects how safe and secure they feel in the setting. Nursery class children thoroughly enjoy having their parents to Stay and Play and have quickly developed the confidence and skill to show their parents what is on offer and 'how to play'. Parents are involved well in their child's development throughout their time in the early years and are kept well informed of their children's progress by staff.

## 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

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 108330    |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Gateshead |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 449339    |

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.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 175  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Acting Chair</b>                        | Jean Bush  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Margaret Liddle  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 7 June 2007  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0191 4875628   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 0191 4877485   |
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