

Annfield Plain Infant School

Northgate, Annfield Plain, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 7UY

Inspection dates 11–12 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Pupils make excellent progress in Key Stage 1. Attainment is above average by the end of Year 2.
- Early years provision is good. Recent improvements to outdoor learning are helping children in the Reception class to make rapid progress.
- As a result, attainment at the end of Reception is improving. More children than in the past have a good level of development when they enter Year 1.
- Teaching of reading is outstanding. This ensures that pupils achieve their best in reading by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They take on responsibilities, care very well for one another and say that they feel very safe.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- The headteacher and the governing body have an exceptionally clear understanding of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses.
- They are very skilled at putting in place new and exciting plans to improve learning. They are just as skilled at checking that these plans are working well and are helping the school to improve further.
- The headteacher is relentless in her efforts to ensure that the school continues to improve. She has tackled areas of weaker teaching successfully.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is good overall rather than outstanding.
- Recent changes to the teaching of mathematics have not had time to be fully effective. The progress of the most-able pupils has slowed a little because work for them has not been hard enough.
- Recent improvements in the early years have not yet had time to impact fully on children's skills and abilities by the end of Reception.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who are least able are not required to write enough as they begin to develop their writing skills.
- When pupils are asked questions, they are not always given sufficient time to develop their answers and stretch their understanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and the Chair and other members of the Governing Body. The inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence, including the school's improvement plan; the school's data relating to pupils' progress; the work in pupils' books and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lunchtimes and break times. He listened to pupils read in classes throughout the school.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in seven lessons taught by four teachers and one session of outdoor learning led by the teaching assistants in the Reception class. He observed five of these sessions jointly with the headteacher. He also observed one lesson jointly with the assistant headteacher. He observed the headteacher reporting back to the teachers on her findings regarding the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement.
- The inspector took into account the 10 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own canvassing of parental opinion. The inspector also spoke to groups of parents.
- Seventeen staff completed questionnaires and the responses were analysed.

Inspection team

Gordon Potter, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This infant school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is average. (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 proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well above average.
- There are lunchtime- and after-school clubs run by school staff and external coaches.
- There are four classes: Reception; Reception and Year 1; Years 1 and 2; Year 2.
- The headteacher works with other school leaders to share her expertise about infant schools and the way they can work effectively with their local junior schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment by:
 - ensuring that even more children achieve the levels expected of them in the early years so that higher starting points can be built upon more rapidly in Key Stage 1
 - ensuring that when pupils are asked questions, they have time to develop their ideas and stretch their understanding
 - offering disadvantaged pupils and those who are least able more opportunities to write as they begin to develop their skills
 - ensuring that work for the most-able pupils in mathematics is challenging and offers them more opportunities to develop and practise calculation skills
 - ensuring that any misunderstandings pupils have in mathematics are addressed quickly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is relentless in her drive and desire to improve the school. Pupils' excellent achievement by the end of Year 2 has not stopped her recognising that the quality of teaching was variable across school and that outcomes for children in the early years were not high enough. As a result, she has tackled weaker teaching, allocated teachers to classes that are better suited to their skills and improved the provision for outdoor learning.
- As a result, teaching is improving and there is more outstanding teaching, which is ensuring that pupils make progress more consistently across the school. The school is a calm, vibrant learning environment where pupils enjoy learning and where teachers are free to explore new ideas.
- While this innovative approach is a strength of the leadership of the school, leaders are also aware that new plans require clear checking. This is the case with the new mathematics programme. While it is helping most pupils to gain a clearer understanding of mathematical ideas, it is limiting the progress of the most-able pupils. The headteacher and the leader for mathematics quickly recognised this and are adapting the teaching accordingly.
- The headteacher reviews the quality of teaching regularly and she has an extremely clear view of what constitutes excellent teaching and learning. She ensures that assessment of pupils' attainment is accurate and rigorous and that there are clear procedures to ensure that work is well matched to pupils' learning needs. Teachers welcome her advice and know that it will be supported by highly effective continuing professional development.
- The headteacher's expertise in early years and infant school education is widely acknowledged and other schools have benefited from her advice.
- The management of teachers' performance has been used extremely well to ensure that all staff have clear targets. These have been successful in helping to improve their teaching and raise pupils' attainment. However, because of the experience profile of the teachers, targets can no longer be linked to financial rewards. It is testimony to both the headteacher's excellent leadership and motivational skills and the commitment of all the teachers that they willingly take on leadership responsibilities.
- Pupil premium funding has been spent on programmes to develop reading, writing and mathematics and to provide extra resources and support, including the 'Seedlings' nurture group, where this is necessary. As a result, disadvantaged pupils currently make similar excellent progress overall as other pupils in school in English and mathematics do.
- The primary school sport funding has been used effectively to support the school's involvement in competitive team sports. The funding has been used to employ coaches who have introduced new sports such as gymnastics and dance. Coaches are also helping to develop teachers' own expertise in teaching physical education. Pupils say that they very much enjoy their lessons. This is contributing very well to pupils' physical development and well-being.
- While the school focuses on developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, it also offers many exciting opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and their understanding of British values. They do so through, for example, the study of science and religious education, and through the use of the school's woodland classroom. They enjoy a range of educational visits and visitors.
- The school is exceptionally clearly focused on identifying any pupils who are at risk of falling behind and has ensured that all pupils make excellent progress by the end of Year 2. This clearly shows the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination.
- The school welcomes the support and advice that it receives from the local authority and from its education development partner. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching and the early years provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors offer extremely strong support and rigorous challenge to the school. The Chair of the Governing Body is highly experienced and has great understanding of the school and its importance to the local community. He is supported extremely well by other governors whose own professional expertise is used to introduce new ideas and to monitor school effectiveness through a programme of school visits. As a result, governors are very clear about the school's plans for the future, the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and the curriculum.
 - Excellent management of the school's finances has enabled improvements to the curriculum and the outdoor classroom to be developed fully. Governors know how the pupil premium funding and the primary physical education and sport funding are spent. They ensure that they have an excellent impact

on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and all pupils' health and well-being.

- Governors understand the arrangements to check on teachers' performance and any rewards for good teaching. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. All staff have been cleared as suitable to work with children and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Almost all pupils behave well in lessons, around school and at lunchtimes and break times. Indeed, when they are fully engaged with their learning, such as when writing poems about autumn or using their artistic skills to create hedgehogs from natural materials, their behaviour is outstanding.
- They are very eager to talk about their work and their school, and politely show visitors around. They develop social skills together at lunchtime where they eat sensibly together, including at the 'top table', and in after-school clubs. They burst into applause when their classmates succeed in their work.
- Pupils understand different types of bullying and say that incidents are rare. Any incidents that do arise are dealt with quickly by adults or the 'minibuds', who help pupils play well together. Pupils also willingly take on roles as school councillors and members of the ECO-team. Together with school governors, they are working to make school dinners even better and to save energy.
- The school has excellent procedures to manage behaviour and there is clear evidence of how individual pupils have improved their behaviour over time, including those who have moved from other schools. However, not all of these young pupils are at the stage where they can behave well all the time.
- A very few pupils irritate others by their silly and immature behaviour, which occasionally stops them learning and disturbs their play. This is why behaviour is not excellent overall.
- Attendance has improved and is currently above average. This is because the school emphasises the importance of coming to school to pupils and parents. It takes appropriate action against those parents who do not send their children to school regularly. As a result, there are remarkably few pupils who are persistently absent. Attendance has also improved because pupils love their learning and achieve extremely well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- There are exceptionally clear and effective systems to ensure that pupils are safe in school and to address any issues that impact on their well-being. Indeed, the school goes the extra mile to ensure that the physical, social and emotional needs of a significant proportion of the pupils are met. For example, there are classes to help pupils develop their balance and coordination and specialist help for the many pupils who have speech and language difficulties.
- The school ensures that the individual needs of the children are known when they join the school and that this knowledge is passed on when they move to junior school.

The quality of teaching is good

- While some outstanding teaching has helped pupils to make outstanding progress in Key Stage 1, the school recognises that the quality of teaching has been variable for different groups and different classes.
- Changes in staffing in the past school year enabled the headteacher to match teachers' skills more closely to their classes. As a result, good and some outstanding teaching helped pupils to make rapid progress in Years 1 and 2 and achieve extremely well at the end of Year 2.
- Changes to the way that pupils learn mathematics have not yet been matched successfully to the learning needs of all groups of pupils. Most pupils are helped to understand mathematical ideas, such as the relationship between odd and even numbers, and make rapid progress. However, work for the most-able pupils has not been hard enough. They have had too few opportunities to tackle challenging problems or do sustained work in their books. As a result, their progress has slowed. Occasionally, the mistakes of all groups of pupils are not picked up quickly enough.
- There is some outstanding teaching of writing over time. Pupils are encouraged to write at length in English and other subjects, such as science and religious education. For example, pupils in Year 2 are highly engaged by their learning about autumn and hibernating animals. They have produced detailed

scientific accounts about hibernation and written poems about falling leaves. Excellent teaching has helped them understand how to use similes, rhymes, rhythms and verse patterns.

- Teaching of writing is good, rather than outstanding overall, however, because disadvantaged pupils and the least able are not given the opportunity to write enough as they begin to develop their skills. Some opportunities are missed to use pupils' enjoyment of their reading to inspire their writing. Occasionally, pupils are not given sufficient time to answer questions, develop their own ideas or stretch their understanding.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Standards at the end of Year 2 are typically above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2013, they were well above average. Unvalidated data show that in 2014 they were above average. This represents outstanding progress for these pupils' from their starting points when they entered Year 1
- Pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to achieve standards that are above the expectations for their age. This represents outstanding progress for pupils whose attainment was well below average when they entered Year 1.
- In 2013, the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils in the school was narrow. In 2014, most of the disadvantaged pupils, half of whom were disabled and had special educational needs, attained the standards expected for their age. Too few did better than this, especially in writing. However, they had made excellent progress from their starting points and closed the significant attainment gap that existed between them and other pupils as they entered Year 1.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make extremely rapid progress because of excellent support and teaching from teachers and teaching assistants. Their needs are quickly identified and plans put in place to meet them, including the highly effective input of the outside agencies that the school uses.
- The school identifies its most-able pupils and ensures that they achieve standards which are well above those expected for their age. The school has reviewed the impact its new mathematics programme is having on the progress of its most-able pupils and is beginning to adapt it in order to ensure that work is as challenging as it has been in the past.
- Inspection evidence shows that progress in reading is excellent and attainment is typically above average by the end of Year 2. The school has ensured that there is a clear focus on reading and a consistent approach to the learning of phonics (the links between letters and sounds) across school. This is supported by excellent teaching of phonics by teachers and teaching assistants. By the end of Year 1, most pupils have a clear understanding of how letters are linked to sounds and this helps them to read words they are not used to.
- Most pupils read often, in school and at home, although some younger pupils do not yet read regularly enough at home. They enjoy the books available to them in school and like to read books together.

The early years provision

is good

- Most children start school with skills and knowledge that are below, and occasionally significantly below, those typical for their age. This is especially the case in speaking and listening, reading, writing and their understanding of numbers and counting.
- In the past too few children were ready for more formal learning when they entered Year 1. In 2014, good teaching helped children to make rapid progress. As a result, more pupils than in the past now reach the early learning goals and had achieved a good level of development when they entered Year 1.
- Recent improvements to the outdoor provision are now helping children to make rapid progress. Their imagination and interest in the natural world are encouraged to flourish through exploration outdoors. This is very skilfully matched to their current learning about fairies and children develop stories about the 'fairies' and the 'trolls' they discover in the woods.
- There is an extremely successful focus on encouraging children to talk about their learning and this is developing their speaking and listening skills. Occasionally, they are asked questions which do not allow them the chance to offer or develop their own ideas.
- As a result of their engagement with the outdoors, children have settled extremely quickly and some with learning and behavioural difficulties have made excellent progress. It has also had a significant impact on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Adults ensure that requirements regarding children's safety are rigorously met.

- Children also settle quickly because there are clear procedures to involve them and their parents, both before they start school and in their learning. They feel very safe very quickly, thrive on the opportunity to explore and are ready to learn. This is seen in their excellent behaviour.
- Indoors and outdoors, there are many opportunities for children to develop their early writing skills and the learning of phonics is managed very well by teachers and teaching assistants.
- There is a strong emphasis on learning numbers and counting, and children learn rapidly when working with their teachers and teaching assistants. However, some opportunities are missed to ensure that work children do on their own has activities that encourage counting and matching objects to numbers.
- The leadership and management of the early years provision are excellent. The assistant headteacher has an extremely clear view of the quality of teaching and learning and the progress that the children make. She is very skilfully working alongside the Reception class teacher, who is new to teaching, to develop her skills and understanding. Indeed, all adults in the early years provision work and plan together and introduce new and imaginative approaches to learning.

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	114025
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	448768

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Ullathorne
Headteacher	Ann Kane
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2009
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