

Mill Hill Primary School

Doxford Park, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR3 2LE

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The very effective headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders and other leaders, has worked well to improve teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from their starting points and, as a result, attainment has risen and is above average.
- Teaching is consistently good and some is better. Teachers know their pupils well and so can plan learning that captures their interest.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is good. They are welcoming to visitors, respectful of adults and one another and proud to be members of this school. Attendance has risen and is above average because pupils want to come to school.
- Pupils say that they feel extremely safe and parents agree that this is a very safe and secure school. Pupils say that bullying is uncommon.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the school's many strengths and any areas for development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is very well developed through the curriculum, which is designed to meet the needs of all the pupils. Traditional British values are woven throughout the curriculum and extracurricular events.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing is not as good as it is in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' writing in their topic work are not as high as they are in their literacy lessons.
- Teachers' marking of writing in other subjects is not as helpful to pupils as it is in literacy and mathematics.
- Teachers do not consistently learn from one another by watching the best teachers at work.
- Teachers' planning in early years does not give children enough opportunities to investigate and find things out for themselves.
- Adults in early years do not have high enough expectations of what children should achieve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school. There were joint observations with the headteacher and senior assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils at play indoors and outdoors at break times and lunchtimes. They had discussions with the school council and pupils from Years 5 and 6. They also talked informally to pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors held discussions with key members of staff, including the leader of the early years, the special educational needs coordinator and the middle leaders. They also met with a representative of the local authority and the school’s educational development partner.
- Inspectors took account of 32 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 19 questionnaires completed by the staff. They also considered the school’s own survey of parents’ views.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including samples of pupils’ work, information about pupils’ progress, information about the monitoring of teaching and learning, the school’s development plan and view of its own performance. They also looked at the minutes of governing body meetings, records of any poor behaviour, attendance information and safeguarding and child protection documents.

Inspection team

Peter Eeva, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Pattinson

Additional Inspector

Anne Humble

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or are cared for by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- Children attend the early years provision full time.
- The headteacher is relatively new in post.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in early years by improving planning so that children have more freedom to investigate and find things out for themselves and by making sure that all adults have accurate expectations of what children should achieve.
- Improve teaching and so raise standards further especially in writing by:
 - making sure that pupils use their writing skills well in all subjects
 - ensuring that marking of written work is always of the same high standards in all subjects
 - sharing the best practice which is evident in the school consistently among all staff.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, with the support of senior staff and an increasingly effective middle leadership team, provides very effective leadership and management and is well respected by governors and the local authority.
- The school has an accurate and realistic view of its own strengths and areas for development. It uses this information well to produce effective plans for improvement, such as raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching,
- Thorough checking of the school's work, with a well-planned programme of professional development, is firmly in place. The monitoring of teaching and the performance of teachers is of good quality. Teachers' targets are closely linked to pupils' achievement and should teachers be eligible for salary increases, these are also linked closely to classroom performance and pupils' achievement. However, there are missed opportunities for teachers to learn from the best practice of others in the school.
- The senior leadership team is well focused on making sure that pupils' achievement continues to improve. Middle leaders' roles have been extended and they are approaching their new challenges with enthusiasm and increasing effectiveness.
- The school has systems that accurately track pupils' progress. Pupils whose progress is not what it should be are quickly identified and support is put in place to help them catch up.
- Child protection and pupil safety are paramount. Leaders ensure that all requirements are met and that the site is as safe and secure as it can be. Leaders are highly skilled at identifying and supporting vulnerable pupils.
- The curriculum has been designed to capture the interests and needs of all pupils. It makes sure that pupils' academic needs are well met and their sporting and artistic talents are also allowed to flourish. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed through the curriculum and also through the variety of extra-curricular events, clubs and activities. Leaders responsible for curriculum design ensure that traditional British values are woven throughout the topics.
- Good use is made of pupil premium funding to provide additional support, so pupils who are eligible for this funding make equally good progress as, and sometimes better than, their classmates do. It also ensures that all pupils have equal access to all that the school provides.
- Good use is made of the primary school sport funding to improve the quality of physical education teaching and to widen the range of sports pupils take part in, such as karate. It is also used to increase the range of competitions available to pupils and to forge links with local clubs.
- The local authority regards the school as one in need of only light-touch support, which is appreciated by the school. Several staff from senior and middle leader level play a valued role in a number of local authority initiatives.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed about all aspects of school life and in particular about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. They are rigorous in making sure that all pupils have the same opportunities to succeed and ensure that pupil premium funding is wisely spent. They also have an oversight of the sport funding spending and are aware of the difference this makes to pupils' physical well-being. They check on the performance of the headteacher and other staff and make sure that there are clear links between pay progression and successful outcomes for pupils. Governors ensure that the school's provision for safeguarding is excellent. Governors bring a wide range of skills to their roles, which they use to good effect. Where there are gaps, they make good use of training to fill them. They regularly ask questions which challenge leaders and hold them to account. Governors are strategic in their thinking and planning and share the same determination to make sure the school is as good as it can be.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In most lessons pupils pay close attention, respond well to their teachers and show very good attitudes to learning. This contributes to the good progress they make. Just occasionally, when classrooms are less well managed, some pupils' attention drifts and they become restless. A very small number of pupils rely too heavily on adults to ensure that they behave well.
- At break and lunchtimes pupils play very well together. Older pupils act as playground buddies and during

wet break times they organise games for younger pupils to play indoors.

- The school's records concerning behaviour and exclusions show that the school sets high expectations and acts promptly if any pupils fall short. As a result, there are very few incidents of a serious nature and exclusions are uncommon.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school has a strong child protection team who work extremely well with parents and outside agencies to ensure that pupils are always safe and able to enjoy and get the most out of their education.
- Bullying is rare and is dealt with systematically and thoroughly by staff. Pupils are actively involved in anti-bullying work and devising ways to make sure that all pupils have a thorough understanding of what bullying is and how to make sure that it does not happen in this safe and happy school community.
- Leaders are vigilant and determined to make sure that extremist views and attitudes have no place in their school. Circle time and other activities provide all pupils with regular opportunities to explore and share their worries and concerns.

The quality of teaching is good

- Regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning have ensured that teaching is good, with some examples of outstanding practice.
- Teachers are committed to developing and improving their work so that they can help their pupils to learn even more. The emphasis given to the importance of good quality relationships and mutual respect ensures a good working atmosphere across the school.
- Teaching assistants play an important role in the school. They have a detailed knowledge of the needs of individuals and are skilled at providing the right kind of support to help pupils make good progress.
- Teachers plan lessons which are interesting and which pupils say are fun. They use the detailed information they have about their pupils to make sure that work is typically hard enough to make pupils think. Pupils in a Year 6 class became absorbed in thinking about how it might feel to be an evacuee in order to write a diary entry.
- The effective teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) ensures that pupils get off to a good start in developing their reading skills. These are systematically built on throughout the school and children become confident and competent readers who are happy to discuss their favourite authors.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Pupils learn their basic mathematical skills at an early age and many say that mathematics is their favourite subject because of the way it is taught. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson pupils responded enthusiastically to the challenge of investigating different methods of adding two-digit numbers. A weakness in pupils' knowledge of their times tables was recognised by the school and steps were taken to improve this. As a result, pupils in Years 1 to 4 have a better command of their tables.
- In literacy lessons pupils learn to write well. They are able to write at length and with increasing accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar. They show that they can adjust their writing to suit different audiences and purposes. However, their writing in their topic work and other subjects is not of the same standard. Pupils do not use the skills they show in literacy lessons when they write in other situations. Some teachers' expectations of length and accuracy are not as high as they are in literacy lessons.
- Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and in their mathematics and literacy books provide informative comments and make suggestions for improvements, which most pupils respond to. However, marking and feedback in other subjects are not as informative and pupils do not often make any improvements, especially to their writing.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement is good and is improving. From starting points in the Reception Year that are typical for children of that age, pupils make good progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. An above average proportion reaches the required standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1. There is a rising trend of attainment so that by the end of Year 2, pupils reach standards that are above average in English and mathematics.

- This good progress continues in Key Stage 2. In the past it has accelerated in Years 5 and 6. However, progress has improved and is now more consistent across all year groups. There is also a rising trend of attainment, especially in reading and mathematics. While standards in writing are above average, they are not as high. The proportions of pupils who make more progress than is expected of them compare favourably with national averages in reading and mathematics, but a smaller proportion makes this rapid progress in writing. The school's records indicate that these trends of rising attainment are set to continue.
- Pupils are encouraged to read accurately from an early age. Pupils develop a good knowledge of phonics (the sounds letters make) by the end of Year 1 and this good foundation is built on systematically so that pupils become good readers by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils now develop their basic mathematical skills early in their school life. The school recognised recently that pupils' knowledge of their times tables was not secure and introduced measures to improve this. Pupils tackle increasingly complex mathematical problems with enthusiasm and greater accuracy as they move through the school.
- Pupils write well, often at length and with precision and accuracy in their literacy lessons. However, when writing in other situations, not all pupils apply the same skills and teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve in their writing are not as high. As a result, standards of writing are lower than they could be.
- The most-able pupils are challenged well and respond to the high expectations that teachers have. As a result, they make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils who are eligible for support from pupil premium funding make good progress, often from lower starting points than other pupils. The gaps between their performance and those of pupils nationally and those in school who do not receive the funding have narrowed significantly in writing and mathematics and have closed completely in reading. Disadvantaged pupils are typically one term behind in mathematics and approximately two terms behind in writing.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities make good and sometimes rapid progress. This is because they are accurately identified and their needs met by skilled teachers and teaching assistants.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children settle in quickly and rapidly become happy members of the early years community. Adults know and care for them as individuals and make sure that they get off to a good start in learning.
- There are very good systems to keep children safe and secure at all times, particularly at the start and end of the school day. Parents agree that their children feel very safe at all times.
- Children join the Reception class with the skills that they need to start learning. While they do make progress from these starting points, it is not as rapid as it should be. Teachers' expectations of what children should achieve are not ambitious enough.
- Indoor and outdoor provision covers all the seven areas of learning and children are provided with activities that are designed to help them develop the knowledge and skills they need. However, children do not have enough opportunities to be curious and investigate things or to find things out for themselves. As a result, the amount that children could learn is reduced and so progress is not as rapid as it should be.
- The early years leader has recently joined the Reception class. She has made sure that the children are safe and happy and has established good links with the parents, who agree that their children are very well looked after while in school. Changes in provision have been made to strengthen the development of communication and language skills, but the impact of these are yet to be seen in children's progress. However, the leader has not ensured that all teachers plan activities that enable children to reach their potential and that all adults have sufficiently high expectations of what children can achieve.

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	108784
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	448730

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	386
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	W Hamilton
Headteacher	D Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	26 May 2010
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