

South Otterington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

South Otterington, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 9HD

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- 'Our children love school' and 'The school has done everything they possibly can for our child' are typical comments from the very many parents who made their views known to the inspector.
- The school has gone from strength to strength since the time of the last inspection.
- The headteacher is passionate about improving the school. Senior leaders have developed a very strong staff team. All are united in their desire to provide the very best education for pupils here.
- Children get off to a good start to their learning in the early years. However, a few children are not always given hard enough work and so do not always reach their full potential. The staff are very supportive and caring and so the children settle in well from the outset.
- Many pupils make rapid progress throughout the school. Standards continue to rise and are almost always above average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils learn very well because much of the teaching is outstanding. Expectations are high. Pupils are helped to think for themselves and to gain an in-depth understanding of their work.
- Pupils say they feel very safe and well looked after by adults at the school. They say that behaviour is really good almost all of the time.
- Respect for one another is high. All pupils are valued and treated as individuals and, as such, the school was awarded the highest level of the Inclusion Quality Mark.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development flourishes in this outstanding school. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Governors have considerable expertise and a keen insight into all aspects of the school's work. They are very supportive, but at the same time robustly challenge the school to ensure that it is doing the best it can for all of its pupils.
- The school's leadership is significantly strengthened by its strong collaborative practice with other schools, such as within the alliance of teaching schools and the alliance of local small schools.
- The rich and wide curriculum is designed to capture pupils' interests and imagination. Pupils thoroughly enjoy very regular opportunities to learn in the nearby forest area. Music, the performing arts and sporting activities are all given high priority.
- Pupils are passionate about environmental issues. Indeed, pupils on the eco committee recently led some training for pupils from other schools, encouraging them to be more environmentally friendly.
- Pupils speak fondly about the many special times in the school calendar, such as when they all gathered to celebrate the lighting of the school Christmas tree during the inspection. All in all, this helps create a strong sense of community and belonging.
- With so many exciting activities on offer, it is no surprise that attendance rates are persistently high.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight part lessons and made several other short visits to lessons to observe teaching and learning. All lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector spoke with governors, a representative from the local authority, senior and middle leaders and staff.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work from every class.
- Discussions were held with pupils from Year 6 and pupils from Key Stage 1. The inspector listened to some pupils read and observed break times.
- A number of documents were examined. They included leaders' views of the school's performance, records of the checks made on teaching and learning, the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents through informal discussions with parents and analysis of the school's own questionnaire to parents. The 32 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were also scrutinised.
- The inspector analysed the 14 responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire about the school.

Inspection team

Fiona Gowers, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Numbers in each year group are sometimes very small. For example, since the previous inspection there have only been seven pupils in some year groups.
- Children start school on a full-time basis in a mixed class of Reception and Year 1 pupils.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium has risen but remains below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and currently no pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is just below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school works in collaboration with a number of local schools in a teaching alliance and in an alliance of small schools.
- The school has received a wide range of awards since the previous inspection. These include the highest level of the Inclusion Quality Mark, the highest level of the Eco Schools Green Flag, the Health and Well-being Award, a school games award and a commitment to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the learning activities in the early years so they challenge and inspire children to extend their basic skills even further and so reach their full potential.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is passionate about providing the very best education and care for pupils at South Otterington. To this end she has fostered the leadership skills of her staff team.
- The headteacher is extremely well supported by the assistant headteacher and committed and hard-working staff team. Indeed, staff responses to the inspection questionnaire about the school were all entirely positive.
- The school has improved markedly since the previous inspection.
- This is a school that has an unwavering commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all its pupils. The school keeps a very careful check on how well each individual pupil is doing. Any pupil at risk of falling behind with their learning is quickly picked up and additional support is provided, where appropriate.
- The leadership and delivery of special educational needs provision are impressive. Established systems and support programmes have been thoroughly overhauled to ensure they continue to help pupils learn as well as they can.
- The early years is well led and managed.
- The school takes a leading role in its work with other schools. For example, it is responsible for leading the work on initial teacher training in the alliance of teaching schools; it has organised inter-sporting competitions and helped to enhance sporting provision within the alliance of small schools.
- Senior and middle leaders play an important role in driving forward improvements in their subject areas. Many members of staff have embarked on additional training to hone their leadership skills. They have also gained much from working alongside other senior and middle leaders across partnership schools. There is very much a corporate approach to school improvement. Teamwork is strong. The views and opinions of all staff are valued, and staff readily help and support each other.
- Performance management processes promote high-quality teaching. Leaders focus relentlessly on improving teaching and learning and are themselves models of best practice. Any weaker practice has been robustly addressed. Many of the support staff too have developed key areas of responsibility and expertise.
- The pupil premium funding is used very well because there has been a specific focus on meeting pupils' individual needs.
- Leaders ensure that a very broad range of activities is provided to enhance the subjects that are being taught in lessons. Since the last inspection, these opportunities have been significantly improved and recognised by, for example, the Eco Schools Green Flag, the Health and Well-being Award, the school games award and commitment to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Award.
- The local authority has full confidence in the school to sustain the significant gains it has made. The school has actively sought external evaluations of its work, continually searching for areas where it can improve still further.
- The primary school sports funding has been used extremely well. Pupils and teachers alike work alongside specialist sports coaches. Not only is this significantly improving pupils' performance levels, but also staff confidence and expertise in teaching a range of sporting activities. Indeed the member of staff responsible for leading this work has qualified as a coach for rugby, netball and tennis. The sports funding has had a huge impact. For example, one third of all of the Key Stage 2 pupils qualified for the recent local cross-country finals. All pupils have had the chance to have a go at rugby and many have subsequently joined local clubs. Pupils have also had the chance to have a go at less common sports, such as archery and climbing. This is motivating many pupils, including those who are sometimes more reluctant, to improve their fitness levels and take part in more sporting endeavours.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved significantly. Governors are extremely insightful and have a very clear view of teaching and data on the school's performance. They regularly ask searching questions to check how well different groups of pupils in school are achieving.
 - Governors have a very good understanding of performance management procedures. They know what has been done to reward good teaching and tackle underperformance since the previous inspection.
 - Governors visit the school regularly and check the impact of the work of both middle and senior leaders. They are well informed about the findings of any external monitoring and this helps ensure a very clear and impartial view of the school's effectiveness is secured.

- Governors bring an extremely wide range of professional skills and expertise in areas such as: finance; health and safety; education and human resources. They also carefully audit their own skills and proactively secure additional training to complement their existing skill base.
- Governors check carefully on the use of additional funds, such as the pupil premium funding, and ensure good value for money. They help develop the pupils' own skills; supporting school council members tender for bids for new playground equipment and helping the work of the pupils' eco committee, for example.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Woven into the fabric of all this school does is the fostering of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well. They are extremely courteous and helpful; readily opening doors for adults in school, for example. They are very thoughtful and reflective and show high levels of care and consideration for others. For example, they gain immensely from opportunities they have to work alongside pupils from a local special school.
- Pupils take great pride in their school. Attitudes to learning are extremely positive. This is shown by pupils' keen thirst for learning, evident in lessons and the work in their books over time. Pupils agreed: 'We like to work hard. It makes us think more.'
- The school prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain. Older pupils regularly read newspapers and discuss items in the news. They have a very good understanding of democratic processes. Elections for the class representative on the school council are held every term. Older pupils recently took part in a debate in the regional Council Chambers as they considered whether sugar should be banned!
- Pupils carry out numerous roles of responsibility with maturity. For example, older pupils readily look after the younger ones. As some Year 6 'buddies' explained, 'If one of the children is on their own at lunchtime, we go and sit with them.'
- Pupils have a very keen interest in looking after the environment. They were so concerned when they found out about the dangers of deforestation that they decided to raise funds and bought an acre of rainforest to preserve it.
- Pupils study a range of world faiths and religions in depth. This helps them develop understanding of and empathy for those from a range of different cultures.
- Pupils enjoy very regular opportunities to work together in the local forest area. This not only helps pupils academically, but also to grow in confidence as they learn to work very well with others in a team.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Attendance rates are high and they continue to rise. There are currently no pupils who are persistently absent. This trend reflects the very rigorous check the school keeps on attendance, the positive partnership it develops with parents and pupils' keenness to come to school.
- The school is very highly regarded by parents. All parents who responded to the school's own questionnaire agreed that their children are safe and happy in school. The many parents who made their views known to the inspector were also extremely supportive of the school. Although there was a very small number of negative responses to the questions on Parent View, no evidence emerged during the inspection to suggest that the school's work to keep pupils safe and secure was not typically of the highest quality.
- Pupils who made their views known to the inspector said they felt very safe and happy in school. Pupils commented, 'We don't have any worries here.'
- Pupils have the opportunity to go on a range of residential trips with other pupils within the alliance of small schools. This helps them to meet other pupils of their age in the area and so they settle quickly when they move onto the next stage of their education.
- Pupils have been given a range of strategies to keep themselves safe. For example, they are very well versed about how to stay safe when using social media sites and are strongly encouraged to go and tell an adult if they ever inadvertently came across any unsettling material on the internet. The school runs regular workshops to help keep parents informed and up to date about matters of e-safety.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying and say they 'are not aware of any bullying at all in

school.' However, pupils say they are confident that any unkind behaviour would be sorted out swiftly by adults in school. They explain that if there are any fallings-out, then the adult asks one pupil some questions to get their viewpoint and then asks the other child the same questions to get their viewpoint. Pupils agree that this approach is fair and really helps sort out any difficulties or misunderstandings.

- Well-kept school records over time confirm that such incidents during the school day are very rare indeed and always very well managed.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Much of the teaching is outstanding and it is never less than good.
- A scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own records confirm this is typical.
- There is a high degree of consistency in classroom displays, resources and approaches.
- Relationships are first rate and a keen love of learning permeates the school. A group of pupils agreed: 'The teachers are really nice. This helps us with our learning. It really helps when someone lets us know we are capable of doing an activity.'
- Adults make good use of very specific praise. This serves to reinforce positive attitudes and also shows pupils clearly how to improve their work further.
- High expectations are a common feature in the vast majority of lessons. There is a clear focus on pupils swiftly moving onto more difficult work, while ensuring a very thorough and in-depth understanding of the key concepts.
- Highly skilled teaching assistants work alongside teachers and provide very effective support. Teachers and teaching assistants ask probing questions to check pupils' level of understanding and to see if they are ready for more difficult work.
- Teachers try hard to make learning fun and this helps learning move on at a swift pace. During the inspection, pupils in lower Key Stage 2 had enormous fun as they sang, clapped and jumped while counting backwards and forwards in threes and fours. They worked with great enthusiasm and gusto.
- Many subjects are taught in a thematic way, which adds interest and enjoyment to pupils' learning. The whole school studies termly or half-termly topics. Each topic is launched with an exciting activity to stimulate pupils' learning and closes with a celebration of their work.
- For example, in a recent 'Determined Discoverers' topic, pupils in the youngest class were really intrigued and excited to discover a footprint and a letter left by a giant. This motivated them to carefully measure the different parts needed for their class model of the giant. In Year 2, pupils visited a local supermarket to taste a range of food and find out more about where different foods come from. In lower Key Stage 2, pupils created an enormous 'timeline' across the playground to gain a better understanding of how long ago the Stone Age was. In upper Key Stage 2, pupils set about designing their own motorised moon buggy models. Such activities really motivate pupils to try their very best.
- A greater emphasis on problem solving in mathematics is helping pupils learn more quickly. Pupils are encouraged to use what they already know and can do to tackle new work. For example, pupils in upper Key Stage 2 confidently used their understanding of basic percentages and knowledge of times tables to calculate more complex problems involving percentages. All in all, this very much creates a 'can-do' culture where pupils readily try to work things out for themselves.
- The teaching of reading is a strong feature of the school. Pupils enjoy a wide range of literature and confidently read to a high standard. A range of activities helps develop advanced comprehension skills as well as fostering a real love of reading.
- The teaching of writing is often excellent. Pupils usually have a keen interest in the topics covered and there is frequently a genuine purpose to the writing. For example, Key Stage 1 pupils worked hard to write thank you letters to a local supermarket after their class visit.
- Marking has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils have the chance to reflect on feedback provided and are also encouraged to consider how they can improve their work for themselves.
- Adults get to know the individual needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs, very well. They subsequently adapt their approach to help pupils learn as well as they can.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Standards at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are typically above average in reading, mathematics and writing and have largely been so since the previous inspection. The work in pupils' books and the school's

current assessment data indicate that this rising trend is set to continue.

- However, comparisons from year to year are difficult because of the small number of pupils in some year groups. Very occasionally, results in national tests and assessments dip a little. This is due sometimes to the specific characteristics of pupils in some classes or to occasional pupil absence during a test.
- In 2014, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics test (letters and the sounds they make) broadly matched the national level. The school has acted very swiftly and has reorganised the teaching of phonics throughout the school to ensure all pupils do as well as they possibly can. Indeed, many of the pupils in Key Stage 1 are growing into confident and fluent readers and standards in reading remain above average overall.
- The school keeps a very careful check on the achievements of all groups of pupils. Pupils achieve very well and many make rapid progress relative to their individual starting points. Throughout the school, the proportions making better than the progress expected of them are high compared with national figures.
- The standards attained by the most able pupils are impressive. In 2014, nearly all of the pupils in this group reached above-average standards in reading and writing and almost as many did so in mathematics too. At Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils reaching above-average standards generally matches or exceeds the national picture.
- The school also endeavours to ensure that pupils of average ability reach their full potential. School leaders are aware that a particularly sharp check is kept on the most able pupils in each class as well as those with special educational needs. However, they want to make sure that other pupils, such as those of more average ability, are also helped to do even better.
- The overwhelming majority of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make excellent progress in their reading, writing and mathematics. The leadership of the provision for such pupils has improved significantly.
- The school ensures that disadvantaged pupils do just as well as other pupils in school and some do even better. In 2014, almost all disadvantaged pupils throughout the school made more progress than expected in reading and over three-fifths did so in writing and mathematics. There are very few disadvantaged pupils in each year group. This means that any comparison between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils in the school and nationally would be statistically unreliable.
- This is a school where pupils achieve very well across the curriculum. As one parent typically commented: 'The progress my children have made is, quite honestly, staggering. They are not only stretched academically but through sport and music too.'
- The school has received an award in recognition of pupils' accomplishments in ICT. Music is also a key strength. Many pupils play musical instruments. During the inspection, Key Stage 2 pupils were asked to have a go at singing an unfamiliar arrangement of the carol 'Away in a Manger' from the nineteenth century for the first time. They sang extremely well with great care, control and expression. Indeed everyone present shared a short period of spontaneous silence and reflection afterwards.

The early years provision

is good

- Most children start school with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age in most of the areas of learning. Nevertheless, this can vary significantly from year to year because of the small number starting in some years. For example, some pupils who have started school more recently joined with knowledge and skills below those typical for their age, particularly in their literacy skills and personal and social development.
- Children achieve well in relation to their individual starting points. In 2014, the proportion reaching the expected level at the end of the Reception year in literacy, numeracy and understanding of the world was close to the national picture. However, it was a little lower in the other areas of learning, including children's personal, social and emotional development.
- Children do particularly well in sessions led by adults. For example, during the inspection, children were able to share their own memories of Christmas with confidence. They then went on to reflect on the lives of children who were less fortunate as a prelude to writing their own thank-you prayers.
- Staff are very caring and build positive relationships with children. This enables children, including those who are disadvantaged, to settle in quickly because they feel safe and secure. Children behave well and enjoy many of the activities on offer.
- Working in a class alongside pupils in Year 1 helps bring on many of the youngest children. Although children achieve well overall in the early years, the school's own records confirm that expectations are not always high enough for a small minority of children and so they do not always do as well as they possibly

can.

- The setting is well led and managed and the quality of teaching is improving. Children enjoy a good range of worthwhile and enjoyable activities both when learning indoors and outdoors. Staff are currently focused on ensuring children are provided with some more challenging and stimulating activities to help them extend their knowledge and skills even further.

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	121603
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	449242

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Juden
Headteacher	Kate Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2010
Telephone number	01609 776273
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