

# Dene House Primary School

Manor Way, Peterlee, County Durham, SR8 5RL

## Inspection dates

2–3 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement has declined and is inadequate. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 has been on a declining trend and in 2014 was very low. Although attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2014 improved, it remained significantly below average in writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils underachieve. Wide gaps exist in the attainment of these pupils compared to others in the school in Year 2, and in reading and writing in Year 6. The wide gaps compared to others, including other pupils nationally, are not closing quickly enough.
- Following the previous inspection, the quality of teaching declined. This was, in part, due to staffing turbulence. Weak teaching resulted in pupils' underachievement. Although teaching has now improved, it is not consistently good.
- Expectations of what the most-able pupils can achieve are not always high enough to ensure that they reach their potential.
- The quality of marking is variable. Pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve.
- Provision in the early years requires improvement. Activities provided for children sometimes lack challenge. There not enough opportunities for children to investigate, explore and 'have a go'. Children are not fully prepared for learning in Year 1.
- The roles of middle leaders are not fully developed and vary in effectiveness; not all middle leaders are fully involved in driving improvements.

### The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders, including governors, have implemented rigorous systems to check the school's work. They have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and what needs to improve.
- The school is improving at an increasingly good rate. Senior leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are effective. Weak teaching has been tackled promptly and, as a result, teaching has, and continues to, improve.
- Governance has improved. Governors have the skills and knowledge to hold the school to account.
- Pupils' achievement is improving across the school. Standards in reading in Year 6, for example, are now close to the national average.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are friendly and welcoming, co-operate well in the classroom and play together sensibly. Poor behaviour is rare.
- Effective care and support ensures that pupils feel safe and are kept safe. Pupils who experience difficulties are helped to overcome them.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is promoted well.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons, four of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to see small groups of pupils working with other adults in and out of the classroom. Inspectors listened to pupils in Years 1 and 2 read. Inspectors made a brief visit to the breakfast club.
- Inspectors held three meetings with different groups of pupils to seek their views and talked informally with pupils at breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors held discussions with members of the governing body, with senior leaders, middle leaders and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, pupils' records of achievement, documents relating to the checks made on the quality of teaching, attendance and safeguarding.
- Jointly with senior leaders, inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books and also photographs illustrating their learning.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Therefore, inspectors took account of the results of the school's own questionnaires to parents and spoke informally to small groups of parents during the inspection.
- Thirteen staff submitted their views via a questionnaire and inspectors took these into account.

## Inspection team

Susan Waugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Pattinson

Additional Inspector

Graeme Clarke

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.*

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils 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 with special educational needs, overall, is well above average.
- The school runs a breakfast club each morning.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been a number of staffing changes since the previous inspection. In the last year, new leaders, including the deputy headteacher, have been appointed to the school.

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

- Further improve the quality of teaching in all key stages, so that it is at least consistently good, in order to increase achievement rapidly in all subjects, especially by the end of Year 2, by:
  - ensuring the highest expectations of all pupils so that they are challenged to achieve as much as they are capable of, especially the most able
  - further improving the teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics), so that work always matches pupils' varying abilities
  - continuing to refine the new approaches adopted to the teaching of mathematics and writing, so that remaining weaknesses in pupils' skills are tackled promptly
  - providing more opportunities for children in the early years to investigate, explore and 'have a go', so that they are well prepared for learning in Year 1
  - improving the quality of marking, so that pupils are always clear about the next step they need to make to improve.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
  - developing the roles of new middle leaders and ensuring that all middle leaders have the necessary skills to check on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and so contribute effectively to driving school improvements forward
  - ensuring that the school's plans for improvement include clear actions and timescales, which allow the impact of improvements on pupils' learning to be measured and evaluated fully
  - ensuring that the pupil premium is used to good effect to ensure that the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and nationally close quickly.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- After a period of staffing turbulence since the previous inspection, the school is now settled. Senior leaders, governors and staff are united in their determination to do their best for pupils so that this quickly becomes a good school.
- The headteacher's passion to ensure that pupils are well cared for, feel safe and enjoy learning helps to promote pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning. The new deputy headteacher offers effective support and is helping to drive improvement forward at a faster pace. A restructure of staffing responsibilities in order to capitalise on the expertise of individuals, along with the development of a more thorough approach to checking on the quality of the school's work, are having a positive impact on improving teaching and pupils' achievement. The pace of improvement, as a result, is starting to gain momentum.
- Although the school's performance is improving securely and quickly in some respects, senior leaders, while having made improvements to teaching since its decline, have yet to raise the quality to a consistently good standard. Some middle leaders are new to their roles and are still at an early stage of developing these roles. Not all middle leaders make an effective contribution to driving school improvement forward and, as a result, leadership and management require improvement.
- Although some middle leaders are at an early stage of developing their roles, their contribution overall is strengthening. Leaders, such as those leading English and mathematics, are starting to lead improvement strongly. They regularly check on pupils' work in books and ensure that they have a good grasp of how well pupils are progressing across the school. This is helping to drive improvement forward at a better rate. However, not all middle leaders have the necessary skills to carry out such actions fully effectively. The checking of teaching and learning in the early years is not undertaken as thoroughly and so some areas for development are missed.
- Senior leaders now have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and what needs to improve. Many well-considered initiatives to address pupils' underperformance and to improve teaching are well under way. Senior leaders are tackling key priorities with a strong sense of urgency. Improvements are evident in all key stages and this shows that leaders have the ability to make further improvements. Even so, improvement plans still do not make fully clear the precise actions or timescales on which to check and measure that the actions taken have had the intended impact on improving learning.
- The leadership of teaching, including arrangements to manage the performance of staff, has been strengthened. More rigorous checks are now undertaken to check on the quality of teaching and any weaknesses are tackled promptly. A weekly check on pupils' workbooks for example, ensures that there is no slippage in pupils' progress and that the better standard of presentation now evident is maintained. However, teaching still remains too variable to ensure that pupils' progress is consistently good.
- Teachers are clear about the higher expectations for pupils' progress and for their own practice. Teachers' professional development needs are identified and addressed, including sharing expertise from other schools, the local authority and within the school. The school's detailed information about teachers' performance is now used to determine whether they progress up the salary scale.
- Arrangements to track pupils' progress have also been strengthened. A more thorough approach means that pupils who are falling behind are now provided with extra support to help them catch up. Leaders are now giving greater consideration to the achievement of different groups of pupils and this illustrates their desire to promote better equality of opportunity. Their efforts are paying dividends. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, for example, are now making much better progress as a result of more effective support.
- The school's work to ensure that the pupil premium funding impacts positively on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is not effective enough. The pupil premium is not well targeted. Plans to improve the achievement of this group remain too vague. As a result, gaps in attainment across the school are still too wide.
- Pupils' moral, social, spiritual and cultural development is supported well. Pupils are taught to respect, tolerate and value our differences. This helps to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain and clearly shows the impact of the school's efforts to foster good relations and tackle discrimination.
- The curriculum offers many interesting, relevant and enriching opportunities, which stimulate pupils' interests, and motivates them to learn. The school has used the primary sport funding well to enhance the range of activities in lessons and after-school clubs, so that more pupils are able to participate and to learn about healthy lifestyles. Pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills are starting to improve at a better rate, because of the greater emphasis placed within the curriculum on developing them.

- In response to declining standards, the local authority supported school leaders to implement more rigorous systems to check on the school's performance and to broker professional development from other schools. It continues to monitor the school's work regularly to ensure that the improvements that have begun are sustained.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors care very deeply about the school community and have a strong desire to ensure the best for pupils. The recent appointment of new members with specific expertise has strengthened their effectiveness. They are now much more rigorous in holding school leaders to account. This is helping the school to improve at an increasingly good rate.
  - Governors now meet monthly to oversee improvements and because of their precise understanding of pupil performance, including data showing how well the school performs in comparison to others, they provide appropriate challenge. Their checks on performance management arrangements now ensure that links are made between the salary progression of staff and effectiveness in the classroom. Their knowledge of the quality of teaching is increasingly accurate as a result of regular visits to the classroom and information provided by the headteacher.
  - Although governors are aware of how funding for disadvantaged pupils is used and are regularly updated, they do not scrutinise the impact of the funding in sufficient detail. Wide gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others across the school and nationally remain too wide.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The very effective and secure relationships which are forged with adults form the basis of pupils' good behaviour and contribute to the happy and friendly atmosphere. In lessons, pupils are eager to learn and to do the best they can. They respect the adults who work with them. Any inattention from pupils is quickly addressed and so learning progresses unhindered.
- Behaviour in the playground is also good. Games of football can be boisterous, but disagreements are quickly sorted out. Parents and pupils agree that instances of poor behaviour are infrequent and dealt with immediately.
- Pupils take pride in their school and in their work. Their presentation of work has improved and is usually neat. The school is attractive and well cared for. Some pupils take responsibility for litter-picking.
- Concerted action and positive engagement with parents has improved pupils' attendance, which is now close to the national average. The proportion of pupils that are absent regularly has reduced.
- The breakfast club enables pupils to have a calm and prompt start to the day. Pupils help to run the club and, as a result, their confidence and self-esteem is promoted well.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that it is easy to make friends and that if they have any concerns there are trusted adults, such as the school counsellor or behaviour manager, they can turn to for help. Pupils say that name-calling and bullying sometimes occur, but are dealt with quickly. Parents agree.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to avoid risk and stay safe. A DVD pupils made about cyber-bullying contributed to their understanding of how to use new technology safely. They are also aware of other forms of risk and how to deal with them, for example road safety. They understand the importance of adhering to school rules and routines and how this contributes to keeping everyone safe.

## The quality of teaching requires improvement

- After the previous inspection, the quality of teaching declined. This was, in part, due to a period of staffing turbulence in Year 2 and Year 6. These weaknesses in teaching over time and low expectations of what pupils can achieve have resulted in their inadequate achievement.
- Greater stability of staffing, alongside the senior leaders' concerted actions to improve it, is helping to bring about much better teaching. However, teaching still requires further improvement, because its impact on achievement is not consistently good across the school. Pupils' progress is still inconsistent.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are now generally higher. Pupils are expected to produce more

work, to present their work with greater care and are encouraged to aim for more challenging targets. Pupils are keen to respond because their relationships with adults are good. They want to do well and show a good level of interest in the activities provided. However, expectations are not still high enough for the most-able pupils. They often find work too easy and are sometimes given more work, rather than more challenging work. They are not given the encouragement to think deeply for themselves. Too few pupils reach the highest levels of attainment as a result.

- Teachers' assessments of what pupils already know and can do are starting to be used more effectively to provide work and support for pupils to match their learning needs more closely. However, this is still too variable across year groups to ensure that progress is always good. Pupils are sometimes asked to complete a task even though it has already been mastered.
- The quality of marking is improving, but remains variable. Work in pupils' books is generally marked regularly. Corrections, such as pupils' spelling and mathematical calculations are identified and pupils are diligent in following these up. However, marking does not enable pupils to understand the next short-term step they need to take in order to speed up their progress and challenge them to deepen their thinking further.
- The teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics is improving. The teaching of phonics is now being taught much more regularly, methodically and thoroughly. This is helping to raise standards. Even so, the quality of teaching of phonics is still variable between year groups. Work provided does not always match pupils' varying skills and abilities.
- New approaches to the teaching of writing and mathematics are helping to speed up pupils' progress. In writing, for example, pupils are provided with more opportunities to write at length and with increasing complexity across the curriculum subjects. As a result, pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills are also starting to improve quickly. In mathematics, careful consideration is given to making sure that pupils' learning builds well on what they already know and can do. Pupils' calculation skills are improving because they are now provided with more opportunities to use and apply them. However, these new approaches are yet to be fully embedded so that pupils catch up completely from underachievement in the past.
- Teaching assistants now provide more effective help to pupils who require extra support and guidance, both in class and when teaching small groups of pupils out of class. They now work closely with teachers to ensure that the help they are providing is appropriate. As a result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making better progress.

## The achievement of pupils

## is inadequate

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 has been on a declining trend and in 2014 was exceptionally low. Although attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2014 improved, it remained significantly below average in writing and mathematics. From their starting points, between Years 1 and 6, pupils' achievement has been inadequate. This is as a result of previous weaknesses in teaching and low expectations of what pupils can achieve. Although improving, pupils' achievement remains inadequate; pupils have not made up for their underachievement in the past.
- Children learn at the expected rate in the early years and the majority enter Year 1 having reached a good level of development. However, this has not been built upon adequately in Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 have rapidly declined in the last two years. In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level of attainment or higher was well below average. Instabilities in staffing in Key Stage 1 have impacted significantly on pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics over time. However, teaching is now improving strongly. School data and inspection evidence show that current standards are higher. More pupils are now working at the levels expected for their age.
- For several years, overall standards at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics have been well below average and in 2013 they were especially low. However, due to better teaching, standards improved significantly across the subjects in 2014, albeit still well below average in writing and mathematics. Most of these pupils made the expected rate of progress from their previous starting points at the start of Year 3. Progress continues to improve in Key Stage 2, with more pupils now making good progress. The improvements evident in standards in Year 6 in 2014 are on track to continue in Year 6 in 2015. However, progress across the year groups still remains too variable to ensure that progress is consistently good and, as a result, achievement in Key Stage 2 requires further improvement.
- Over time, pupils have underachieved in reading. In 2014, although an improvement on the previous year, less than half of pupils in Year 1 reached the national standard in phonics (linking letters with sounds). Most of those who had not reached the standard in Year 1 in 2013 also failed to do so by the end of Year 2 in 2014. In the past, pupils have not acquired essential reading skills quickly enough. Although they are now improving, progress is still not quick enough to make up for past underachievement. Even so, pupils

now show much greater enthusiasm and interest in books. Younger pupils can talk about their favourite stories. Standards in reading in Year 6 in 2014 were much closer to average. The proportion making more than expected progress in reading is close to average.

- Pupils' writing and mathematical skills are underdeveloped. They have not reached the expected standard, because they did not acquire basic mathematical and writing skills quickly or securely enough.
- The most-able pupils, over time, have underachieved. Too few pupils reach the higher levels of attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6. Low expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving in the past have significantly hampered the achievement of the most able. Although expectations of all pupils are now generally higher, the work provided for the most able still lacks the necessary challenge for the brightest pupils to reach their potential.
- Although caring staff ensure that the social and emotional needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are met, over time they have underachieved as a result of weak teaching. These pupils are now making much better progress. They are now supported more effectively to address gaps in their learning and their basic skills, such as phonics, are improving quickly.
- Disadvantaged pupils underachieve. Across the school, gaps in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared to others in the school and nationally are not closing quickly enough. In Year 6 in 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared to others in the school was about two terms behind in reading and one term in writing. There was no significant difference in mathematics. This is narrower than the gaps reported between these groups in Year 6 in 2013. Even so, compared to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, in 2014 the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in English and mathematics was around one year behind other pupils nationally. At the end of Year 2 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils were around four terms behind other pupils nationally. Although this represents an improvement in writing and mathematics, the gap widened in reading.

### The early years provision

### requires improvement

- Children feel safe and settle quickly to the routines of school. They behave well, are considerate to each other and respond to adults' requests promptly. As a result, children's progress is sometimes good, but it varies. Consequently, from their varying starting points, children make typical progress. Progress is not good, because sometimes the activities provided lack challenge and there are not always enough opportunities for children to investigate, explore and 'have a go'. This hampers children's achievement.
- Although a similar proportion to those nationally reach the standard expected of them by the end of Reception and they have acquired the required knowledge, they are not fully prepared for learning in Year 1. This is because they do not have good enough skills to be able to think or do things for themselves. Children are not given enough opportunity to talk and explain or to develop their language skills when working with adults. Opportunities to develop their language skills are better when they are learning outdoors, but these times are restricted because of the organisation of the building.
- Parents are invited to attend a variety of events within the school, are regularly informed about what is happening in school and are invited to talk about their child's progress three times a year. However, parents are not fully involved in contributing to the school's knowledge of their child or their learning.
- Leaders ensure that children learn in a safe and secure environment. The current coordinator of early years provision holds regular team meetings and identifies which areas are in need of improvement. Assessments of what children know and can do and what they need to learn next are carefully checked when children start school. By working with staff in other schools, these, and on-going assessments are now more accurate. However, the leadership is not fully effective, because checks on the quality of teaching, learning and progress in all of the areas of learning lack rigour to an extent.

## 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>	114200
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	449158

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	298
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Joan Temple
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Lonsdale
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 November 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5862937
<b>Fax number</b>	Not applicable
<b>Email address</b>	p2376.admin@durhamlearning.net

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