

Cockton Hill Junior School

McIntyre Terrace, Cockton Hill, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL14 6HW

Inspection dates 15–16 April 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement requires improvement. Although many pupils make expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their different starting points, not enough make more than this by the end of Year 6.
- Too few of the most able pupils reach the higher standards of which they are capable in reading, and mathematics. School information suggests that this is unlikely to change this year.
- There remains a gap in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in comparison with other pupils in the school and nationally, even though their rate of progress is increasing.
- Teaching requires improvement. The quality of teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that pupils learn well in all year groups.
- The quality of presentation in pupils' books is inconsistent. Some teachers accept standards that are too low.
- The teaching of reading does not help all pupils to develop good reading skills. The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) does not always build on pupils' previous learning.
- After the previous inspection standards fell sharply. They are now improving but pupils are only making expected progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher understands the school and knows what needs to be done to continue to improve. She has the full confidence of staff, governors and parents.
- Senior leaders, managers and governors have acted decisively since the last inspection to tackle weaknesses, particularly in achievement and in the quality of teaching. This is improving the school's overall effectiveness.
- Governors know the school well. They use their wide range of skills to support and increasingly challenge school leaders.
- The school promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well. There is a positive atmosphere and a good range of activities that enrich pupils' learning.
- Firm action by school leaders has significantly improved attendance in 2014 to just below the national average.
- The school's caring ethos helps pupils with significant social or emotional needs to thrive and make the best of their education.
- Pupils behave well and enjoy school. They feel safe and well looked after by staff and say that bullying is rare. They enjoy their learning and are increasingly keen to do well – a view shared by parents.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Three lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised work from pupils in each class and analysed comprehensive information about their attainment and progress over time. Inspectors listened to a group of pupils read.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher, other school leaders and governors. A telephone discussion also took place with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff in their responses to the inspection questionnaire.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including school policies, safeguarding procedures and the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors talked to parents during the inspection and considered the results of a survey undertaken by the school in March 2015. Too few parents completed the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, to provide meaningful information.

Inspection team

Jonathan Chicken, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graeme Clarke

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cockton Hill Junior School is a smaller than average-sized primary school with two classes in each year group.
- Almost all pupils join the school from Cockton Hill Infant School and are from White British backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is much lower than the national average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported by the pupil premium, is above the national average. This additional government funding is provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school runs a breakfast club for its own pupils.
- The headteacher, previously the school's deputy headteacher, took up post shortly before the inspection. The Chair of the Governing Body was in post at the time of the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and accelerates pupils' progress and improves achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - raising some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve by ensuring that work is always hard enough and that pupils present their work neatly
 - raising awareness of what makes teaching effective and improving the range of techniques that teachers and their assistants use
 - making better use of questioning to deepen and challenge pupils' thinking at their differing levels
 - strengthening the teaching of reading so that it is consistently well-organised, effective and closely linked to pupils' prior learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Shortly after the last inspection, standards fell sharply because of difficulties that the school was facing. Governors, staff, parents and pupils agree that school leaders have been effective in reversing this decline and strongly driving improvements to the school during this difficult period. Inspection findings confirm this view. These improvements have included a number of new teachers joining the school, a reorganisation of support staff and the refurbishment of many parts of the school building to provide additional spaces for teaching.
- While recognising that some improvements have not had sufficient time to become fully embedded, the new headteacher and team have built on the improvements started by their predecessors rapidly and effectively. The impact of these improvements includes improving attendance, behaviour and supporting pupils to develop stronger attitudes to learning.
- Senior leaders recognise that standards are not high enough in view of pupils' starting points and are taking effective action to improve achievement. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of what they need to do to accelerate progress in order to raise standards further. The impact of this strong leadership is particularly evident in the rapid improvements to learning and progress in Years 3 and 4 and this picture of improvement is moving up through the year groups.
- The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate in all key respects. The improvement plan is accurately focused on relevant priorities.
- The school's work to improve teaching is based on regular and thorough checks on the quality of teaching. Newly qualified teachers are supported successfully in their professional development. This is because of effective mentoring in school and the good quality training the local authority provides for them.
- The use of additional pupil premium funding is having a positive impact on the progress of disadvantaged pupils, which is good this year. Use of this funding is rightly focused on the specific needs of disadvantaged pupils, although its impact on their attainment is not fully realised. This is because these pupils have further to catch up to reach the standards expected of them and so reduce the gap in attainment with other pupils in school and nationally.
- Systems to manage teachers' performance are rigorous. Teachers' targets are closely linked to what pupils should achieve.
- The school has reshaped the staffing structure to form teams that oversee the upper and lower parts of the school. This has enabled middle leaders to further extend their experience in improving the performance of staff and refine their leadership skills.
- Staff use detailed information relating to pupils' attainment and progress and, under the guidance of both senior and middle leaders, use this successfully to plan increasingly challenging lessons. Pupils now make more rapid progress as a result.
- School leaders promote pupils' personal and social development effectively and foster good relationships throughout the school. Consequently, pupils are kept safe and behave well.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective. They meet statutory requirements and are based on detailed and accurate record-keeping and highly effective relationships between staff and families. The school works well with the local authority and other agencies to ensure the well-being of its pupils.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are taught to be tolerant and particularly respectful of others. As a result, relationships are good and pupils are well-prepared for the diversity of life in our modern British democratic society. The school was recently awarded the Rights Respecting Award from UNICEF in recognition of its commitment to equality and good citizenship.
- School leaders ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed and to participate fully in the life of the school. There is no evidence of discrimination. However, the school is not fully effective in ensuring that pupils consistently achieve the best they can.
- Leaders have closely reviewed the structure and content of the school's curriculum to reflect recent national changes. As a result, its curriculum is stimulating and effective. The school works cooperatively with others locally to ensure that what is taught engages pupils' enthusiasm. School leaders ensure that pupils have a wide range of experiences to enhance and bring depth to their learning through the skilful deployment of subject specialist teachers in a range of subjects, including physical education and computing. The school proudly celebrates its achievements through vibrant and colourful displays, for example in winning a local art competition with work inspired by the Magna Carta.
- The school receives light-touch support from the local authority whose officers categorise the school's overall effectiveness as good. The support provided has been effective in helping the school's leaders in

improving behaviour and attendance, and in mentoring newly qualified teachers. The school has good relationships with parents. Staff describe a strong team ethic and have confidence that the school is led well. Links with the partner infant school are now established and improving.

- Provision for sport is a strength. The primary school sport funding is used effectively. Activities have increased pupils' already significant participation in sports closely matched to their interests in sports, such as judo and golf. The additional staff training provided by specialist coaches ensures that the new provision is sustainable.

The governance of the school:

- The governing body is effective. Its well-informed members use their skills to ask increasingly challenging questions to support the school in its improvement. Governors review data and are knowledgeable about how well pupils perform in relation to those in other schools nationally. Governors know how well different groups perform in comparison to each other. Governors are confident about how recent initiatives have improved pupils' attendance.
- Governors plan expenditure carefully, and check to make sure that funds are spent wisely to promote pupils' achievement. In the case of pupil premium funded pupils, governors know that the progress of these pupils has benefitted from the funds spent to support them, although governors acknowledge that these pupils' levels of attainment need to be closer to those of their classmates.
- Governors know about the quality of teaching from their regular visits to school. They know that teachers must meet targets associated with pupils' progress, the school's main areas for improvement and their own professional development before they can advance on the teachers' salary scales.
- Governors make sure the school is safe, that it fully meets safeguarding requirements and that leaders check on the suitability of staff to work in the school.
- Governors take an active part in encouraging pupils' progress and attitudes to school. The longstanding Chair of the Governing Body regularly supports many aspects of the school's work, including a focus on groups of pupils who have previously demonstrated challenging behaviour. As a result, pupils understand the importance governors place on good behaviour to support their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, pupils show positive attitudes to their learning and try their best.
- Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are good. There is a culture of respect within the school.
- Good behaviour in all aspects of school life is evident in the warm and welcoming ethos, where pupils are polite and helpful and considerate of one another. These skills prepare pupils well for their future.
- The very few pupils who find good behaviour difficult are supported well by staff and, if required, by specialist local provision. As a result, their behaviour improves well over time. Exclusions have decreased, ensuring that all pupils are included in what the school can offer them.
- While attendance remained just below the average in 2014, it has improved significantly since the previous year because of the school's robust work with families. Leaders are resolute that good attendance is imperative and quickly take firm action to challenge any persistent absentees.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders ensure that the school site is secure and well maintained. The suitability of staff to work with children is fully checked prior to their appointment. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are audited appropriately by governors.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that adults will manage any concerns they may have.
- The school provides frequent lessons on aspects of safety, often delivered by specialist visitors. Pupils know how to manage their own safety and understand the risks of taking drugs or smoking.
- Pupils are very aware of the risks of cyber-bullying. The school regularly draws pupils' attention to these risks and works hard to help pupils protect themselves from the dangers posed by being online and when using social media.
- Pupils know that bullying is unacceptable and that it may take different forms. They believe that it is not an issue in the school and parents agree. Older pupils can articulate the school's ethos of respect clearly and are clear that prejudiced-based bullying such as name-calling rarely occurs. This demonstrates the impact of the school's work to ensure that pupils are safe and happy at school.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching across the school is variable, rather than consistently good. It requires improvement because, in too many classes, expectations over time have been too low. This means that work does not always challenge pupils sufficiently to make as much progress as they should, to reach higher standards or present their work well. However, more recently, leaders have demonstrated their capacity to lead strong improvements in teaching and as a result, achievement is rising, especially that of younger pupils.
- Teachers do not always make the best use of questioning to help pupils to learn. This means pupils are not asked to think for themselves frequently enough and so deepen their learning. For example, in an English lesson, pupils were only asked questions that recalled sentence starters from a printed resource. As a result, pupils, particularly the most able, were not sufficiently challenged and their progress was limited.
- Although the teaching of writing still requires improvement, leaders have made several improvements to how pupils are taught grammar, punctuation and spelling. The impact of this can be seen in the improved quality of pupils' writing. Pupils know what constitutes good quality writing and they use this knowledge to edit and refine their work. Standards of handwriting have recently improved because expectations from staff are more consistent.
- Teachers mark pupils' writing in their English books regularly. Feedback gives clear guidance for pupils to help them improve their work. Pupils now have good opportunities to act upon this advice and make progress as a result. The strength in marking is a direct outcome of the guidance and expectations of senior leaders.
- The teaching of reading is inconsistent. The teaching of phonics, for example, has developed pupils' understanding of how to blend letters into words effectively. However, some pupils have not mastered the exact sounds that letters make and so their blending skills do not always help them to read. Leaders have started to address this aspect with more staff training and consistency of approach that build more effectively on pupils' previous learning. The most able pupils are not taught to read effectively enough to help them attain high standards. At times, the materials they are asked to read are not challenging enough and do not engage their interest.
- The teaching of mathematics also varies in its effectiveness. Recent work to improve the quality of teaching has improved the subject knowledge of teachers. An additional regular lesson to teach basic number skills to pupils has recently been effective in increasing rates of progress across the school.
- Pupils in Years 6 are taught mathematics in groups of similar abilities. This has helped ensure that the needs of the most able and the less able pupils are better catered for and so they benefit from this arrangement. However, teachers do not always ensure that they match the work to the different abilities of the pupils within the groups. This means that some pupils, particularly the most able, still do not make the progress in mathematics and writing they should in order for them to reach higher standards.
- Teaching assistants and other adults are skilled and support pupils' learning well. They give particularly strong support for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils consider homework activities to be purposeful. This view is shared by inspectors and parents.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils do not make as much progress as they should from their starting points on entry into Year 3. Pupils join the school with broadly average attainment. By the time they reach Year 6, their standards of attainment are not high enough in reading, writing or mathematics. Strong, highly-focused action by school leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 and 4 has resulted in rapidly improved achievement in these year groups. While this rapid pace of improvement is not consistent across the school, improved achievement is evident in all years.
- In the current year, progress has improved for most groups of pupils across the school and this is reflected in the work in pupils' books. However, the school's own information about the progress that pupils are making confirms that inconsistencies remain and pupils at present in Year 6 are on track to achieve results similar to the current national average. This is because their progress has not been sufficiently accelerated over time to enable them to reach higher standards of attainment.
- Despite improvements, there are still variations in the quality of pupils' written work. Handwriting and presentation are relative weaknesses for some older pupils, who have not learned to join their letters. The

school is also working with increased rigour to tackle weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was over two terms behind others in the year group in reading, writing and mathematics. Compared to the attainment of other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were over a term behind in writing, two terms behind in their reading and almost three terms behind in mathematics. Throughout the school, disadvantaged pupils this year are making good progress because of the effective, targeted support they receive. Currently, gaps in attainment are closing, especially in reading and mathematics.
- The needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are identified accurately. They receive appropriate support now and work in their books confirms that current progress is good but, over time, their progress still requires improvement.
- The most able pupils do not attain the high standards of which they are capable by the end of Year 6. The progress they make requires improvement. It fluctuates between subjects and from year to year. School leaders have acted swiftly to address these differences. For example, in the current year, leaders have correctly focussed their efforts on bringing about improvements to the teaching of writing, particularly for the most able pupils in Years 6. As a result, achievement in writing is now rising rapidly.

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	114110
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	456113

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Cresswell
Headteacher	E Stevens
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2011
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