

# Howletch Lane Primary School

Pennine Drive, Peterlee, County Durham SR8 2NQ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 January 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders have not improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment rapidly enough since the previous inspection.
- Subject and key stage leaders are underdeveloped; thereby, analyses of school information are weak and planning to secure improvement lacks rigour.
- Leaders and managers do not have a shared understanding of assessment systems.
- The quality of teaching and learning is variable. This means that not all groups of pupils make sufficient progress in lessons.
- Children in the early years are not consistently supported to make the progress that should be expected of them. Expectations are too low.
- Pupils do not read and write frequently enough to enable them to develop skills swiftly, particularly in the early years and Key Stage 1.
- Outcomes for pupils in the early years and Key Stage 1 are too low.
- Teachers do not always plan lessons and tasks that challenge pupils sufficiently.
- Pupils are not always fully aware of what they need to do to improve their skills, knowledge or understanding within subjects.

### The school has the following strengths

- A distinctively caring ethos is tangible and well established. Positive and respectful relationships are effectively embedded by school leaders.
- Pupils are courteous and sociable. Their healthy self-confidence, eagerness to please and empathy for others are creditable.
- Leaders use the extra money given by the government to support disadvantaged pupils effectively, meaning the gaps between this group and others are narrowing across subjects and key stages.
- The wide range of extra-curricular opportunities is enriching and inspiring. Pupils are enabled to develop a breadth of creative and sporting skills.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who access the enhanced mainstream provision are very well provided for and expertly supported. Most make good progress.

## Full report

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

- Improve the effectiveness and impact of leadership and management by:
  - devising priority improvement plans that have well-defined, measurable success criteria, stringent timeframes and clear lines of accountability
  - evaluating actions and interventions regularly and rigorously in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and to inform next steps in planning
  - developing the skills of subject and key stage leaders so that they are able to impact effectively on the quality of teaching and learning in their area of responsibility, securing rapid progress for all groups of pupils
  - agreeing and utilising well-defined assessment systems in partnership with staff to allow regular, accurate monitoring and to enable robust discussions about pupils' attainment and progress.
- Accelerate pupils' progress particularly in the early years and Key Stage 1 by:
  - raising adults' expectations of pupils' capabilities so that all pupils, including the youngest, are challenged to reach the highest possible standards
  - improving the consistency of teaching by developing teachers' skills in the use of assessment to inform planning so that good progress is reliably secured for all groups of pupils
  - structuring increased opportunities for pupils to practise and develop key skills, particularly in reading and writing, from the moment they enter the school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work in positive partnership with governors to plan school improvement. However, their views of standards are overly generous and expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Improvement since the previous inspection has, therefore, been too slow.
- Senior leaders have identified wide-ranging areas for improvement, including recommendations from the previous inspection report. This said, insufficient focus on core issues means the areas for improvement identified previously have not been fully addressed. Planning lacks easily understood measures of success that could be tracked over time. Plans are not always evaluated rigorously for impact and targets are sometimes carried forward without review.
- The deputy headteacher has worked diligently to put in place a school-wide assessment system. Nevertheless, leaders and managers are not using this effectively or with collective understanding, meaning that end-of-term and end-of-year expectations for pupils are unclear and accountability is, therefore, weak.
- Academic aspirations for some groups of pupils are too low. While the caring and friendly ethos effectively supports aspects of the development of all pupils' social, emotional, spiritual and cultural development, ambition for some groups of pupils in terms of attainment is deficient.
- Leaders and governors are not managing the performance of all staff effectively. For example, the quality of teaching over time has not improved to good despite the increased frequency of monitoring which includes lesson observations. Staff are not held accountable for pupils' outcomes.
- Subject and key stage leaders are not fully involved in the monitoring of standards and interventions in their areas of responsibility. They have had insufficient opportunities to develop their skills or contribute to improvement.
- A new enquiry-based curriculum has been introduced by way of enrichment. The impact of this initiative has not yet been fully evaluated by leaders to measure benefits in terms of achievement. A notable strength, however, is the manner in which a range of topical issues are explored and discussed insightfully by pupils, two examples being diversity and discrimination, resulting in learning which is valuable preparation for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use the extra money from the government to narrow educational gaps for disadvantaged pupils skilfully. In 2015, for example, carefully considered actions led to measurable success, particularly in Key Stage 2 where the proportion of disadvantaged pupils that achieved at least national standards in reading and mathematics was equal to or better than other pupils.
- Good use is also made of the government monies for improving sport and physical education. For instance, staff have been afforded professional development opportunities to develop their skills, expertise and confidence in delivering high-quality lessons. Consequently, pupils are benefiting.
- The special educational needs coordinator leads this area of responsibility effectively. Pupils are challenged as well as supported, and lessons are carefully tailored to meet the needs of each individual. Strong links with parents and external agencies contribute to the good progress made.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors have a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities. At times, governors have been swayed by the overly generous picture presented by school leaders and hold either exaggerated views of progress or expectations of pupils' achievements that are not high enough. Recently restructured committee groups are enabling governors to start to challenge leaders about progress and outcomes more rigorously.
  - Governors come into school regularly, meet with senior leaders and visit classrooms. In this way, they build a first-hand picture of the work of school leaders and managers.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The care and consideration given to all pupils by staff in the school is unmistakable; pupils' safety and well-being are of paramount importance and pupils themselves are sure about this. 'Safe' is a word pupils use regularly to describe how they feel in school. All staff are vigilant and alert to subtle changes in demeanour or attitudes in pupils. This attentiveness is particularly apparent in the enhanced mainstream provision which supports up to 12 pupils with physical disabilities from across East Durham. Inter-agency working to manage the effective care of each child is well established.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not improved substantially since the previous inspection, particularly in the early years and Key Stage 1. Assessment procedures are not firmly embedded; thus teachers' planning lacks accuracy and does not reliably meet the needs of all pupils.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Teachers have been influenced by the low expectations of leaders and consequently do not expect or demand enough from pupils; they do not support or challenge them to ensure rapid progress is made. Some groups of pupils in the early years and Key Stage 1 fail to reach expected standards across subjects and the results of the phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening test in Year 1 remains below national averages.
- Reading journals indicate that some pupils have not read with an adult in school since last term. Teachers' engagement with parents via reading journals is variable and at times staff do not respond to parents' comments or requests. Pupils are not currently able to access the school library to supplement their reading materials and to learn to read for pleasure.
- Interventions are planned to give pupils extra opportunities to practise and develop skills, but these are not always focused on the correct priorities nor are they monitored carefully for impact. For example, although reading is clearly an area requiring improvement in the early years and Key Stage 1, no reading interventions have taken place this academic year. The impact of staff training in the autumn in order to promote improvements in pupils' speaking and listening has not been evaluated by leaders or other staff.
- Teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 present a stronger picture than Key Stage 1 or early years; however, variability in quality exists across classes. Where teaching is strongest, teachers' good subject knowledge and effective questioning mean pupils of all ability groups make good progress.
- Some effective teaching and learning in Nursery classes are apparent. Children enter Nursery below national standards and staff carefully assess their capabilities. Staff quickly identify each child's strengths and areas of need and plan accordingly. In this way, they successfully ensure that most children have made at least expected progress on exit.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are unfailingly polite, confident and kind-hearted. Senior leaders and all staff place a strong focus on equality and the rights of each child alongside elements of an enquiry-based curriculum where topics like diversity and relationships are explored. The impact of this approach has been strong on pupils' personal development.
- The physical well-being of pupils is of particular importance. Leaders actively seek to promote pupils' healthy lifestyles. A prime example is the commendable work in partnership with health professionals in supporting the particular needs of pupils accessing the resourced provision.
- Staff and pupils care sincerely about the emotional well-being of others. This begins with the youngest pupils. In Nursery staff, are already encouraging pupils to think sensitively about others as well as themselves and pupils can be seen cooperating well and helping each other as a consequence of these good foundations.
- Teachers and pupils tackle challenging subject matter like 'hate-crime' and stereotyping head on. A group of Year 6 pupils frankly discussed lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues with appropriate respect and maturity. These opportunities are enabling positive social, moral and cultural development.
- A nurturing ethos prevails. Pupils are protective of those who they feel are most vulnerable and are adamant that bullying will not be tolerated. They actively challenge negative comments about others and have confidence that teachers are there to help. They are particularly pleased with the new fencing, gates and surveillance cameras, as this makes them feel protected, safe and valued.
- Pupils take full advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that give the school its distinctive ethos. The school orchestra and choir are firm favourites as too is the art class for those with particular gifts and talents. Pupils and adults are rightly proud of these aspects of their school.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This extends to lunchtimes and transition times; pupils move calmly and sensibly, holding doors open for each other and adults without prompting. Different age groups play

happily together and adapt their play to suit without relying on adults for direction. Staff hold high expectations of behaviour and conduct which contributes to the positive ethos.

- Punctuality is good and improving. Attendance is in line with national expectations and leaders review systems regularly to ensure this is maintained or bettered. Good attendance is rewarded and exclusions are rare. Any persistent absenteeism is carefully monitored and leaders take appropriate actions to both support and challenge families. This is particularly valued by parents when children have prolonged or regular hospitalisation.
- In lessons, pupils are very respectful of adults, listening carefully to instructions and responding swiftly to requests. Even on occasions where pupils are insufficiently stimulated or challenged by the planned learning, low-level disruption is minimal. They are perpetually willing and ready to please.
- Pupils in the enhanced provision behave well. Staff hold equally high expectations of this group of pupils in terms of behaviour, and thereby their good behaviour, whether in the unit or in classes with their mainstream peers, persists.

### Outcomes for pupils

### require improvement

- The school's own information about progress and its use of assessment are muddled, making it tricky to secure improved outcomes for current pupils. Leaders cannot confidently define good progress, meaning staff are unsure too. In turn, pupils cannot express their next steps in learning in English, mathematics or other areas of the curriculum.
- In all subjects in Key Stage 1, pupils are not working at the expected standard for their age because teaching and assessment require improvement. Reading and writing standards are particularly weak. Pupils are, therefore, underprepared for the demands of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils taking the national phonics test in Year 1, having learned about the sounds that letters make, are not reaching standards typical of their age. Those having to resit the test in Year 2 are steadily catching up with others nationally.
- The teaching and learning of reading are infrequent and are not securing expected progress in the early years or Key Stage 1. Pupils read with adults once a week regardless of their starting point. Adaptation for those requiring support or challenge is not an established feature of practice and so results in both reading and writing fall short of national standards.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils made good progress in 2015. Outcomes in all subjects were slightly above others nationally and attainment in English grammar, punctuation and spelling was significantly better than national averages. Nonetheless, not all current pupils are being supported or challenged to excel and reach standards above average. Inconsistencies in teaching and learning exist and low expectations are putting a ceiling on achievement for some.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are broadly comparable to others in Key Stage 2. This large group of pupils did better than other pupils nationally in 2015 in reading, writing and mathematics. Narrowing the gaps for these pupils in this way signifies a strength of the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with severe and complex special educational needs are very well supported and provision is effective. At times, one or two individuals stall or fall behind. However, strategies are quickly put in place to support pupils to catch up.

### Early years provision

### requires improvement

- Early years leaders do not use assessment information relating to children's progress in a fitting manner. Accordingly, challenging targets and improved outcomes for groups of children are not secured. Children eligible for free school meals, for example, significantly underperform compared to others and while children achieve well in some aspects of mathematics, in numbers performance is poor.
- Adults do not read regularly with children. Activities and lessons do not enthuse children or inspire them to read or write independently, and as a result the opportunities provided both indoors and outdoors for children are little used. Reading and writing outcomes unsurprisingly are disappointing.
- Children enter the school with skills and abilities which are lower than those typical for their age. The nursery staff plan carefully tailored learning opportunities in accordance with the children's needs as well as their interests, preparing them competently for the Reception class and securing good behaviour.
- Relationships with parents are positive. Pupils in the Reception class, however, are not reaching the levels

that should be expected of them. Having experienced effective provision and teaching in Nursery, their progress stalls and too few reach good levels of development in readiness for the Key Stage 1 curriculum.

- Good-quality resources are enjoyed by early years pupils and there is a happy, busy atmosphere. This said, timely intervention by adults to challenge children's thinking or move learning forward in the Reception class is haphazard. Following the children's interests and letting them dictate the pace of learning may be the primary focus, but at times these principles are at the expense of children's needs.
- Staff are highly aware of safeguarding requirements in the early years and they are well trained in terms of child protection. Children are safe and feel safe. They articulate their needs clearly to trusted adults.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114198
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10003703

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	450
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Karen Stevens
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Helen Adair
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 586 2765
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.howletchlane.co.uk">www.howletchlane.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:o.howletch200@durhamlearning.net">o.howletch200@durhamlearning.net</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11–12 April 2011

## Information about this school

- Howletch Lane Primary is a larger than average primary school.
- The school has an enhanced mainstream provision for up to 12 pupils with physical disabilities.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than national averages.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs who have statements of need or education, health and care plans is above average.
- This is a stable school serving an area of deprivation slightly higher than schools nationally.
- The school has achieved Level 1 of Unicef's Rights Respecting Schools Award.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors conducted lesson observations in all classes across the school, including Nursery. Several lesson observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- The comments and responses on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered and inspectors talked with parents before, during and at the end of the school day.
- Pupils' work on display and in books was looked at. The headteacher and deputy headteacher evaluated pupils' writing together with inspectors.
- Regular meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, meetings were held with governors, subject leaders, key stage leaders, the early years leaders and special educational needs coordinator, assessment manager and curriculum leader.
- A range of school information and documentation was examined relating to behaviour, curriculum, attendance, school governance, pupils' progress, safeguarding, school improvement planning and evaluation, staff performance management and monitoring.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority and took account of the staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors met with pupils formally and informally at breaktimes and in meetings and reviewed the responses of pupils to the school's own questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Fiona Manuel, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jane Austin	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynda Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Langley	Ofsted Inspector
Anne Vernon	Ofsted Inspector



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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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