

Silver Tree Primary School

Durham Road, Ushaw Moor, Durham, DH7 7LF

Inspection dates

26–27 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Requires improvement |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Requires improvement |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Require improvement |
| Early years provision | Requires improvement |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The headteacher’s school improvement planning lacks rigour and clarity.
- Senior leaders do not delegate effectively or hold staff accountable with sufficient transparency and rigour because performance management procedures and processes are weak.
- Senior leaders are not securing well-defined assessment systems to support and inform teachers’ planning so that it is good.
- Leaders do not analyse the impact of actions taken to secure improved progress for pupils with sufficient precision.
- Subject leaders do not have an accurate picture of the progress of some groups of pupils across the school, in their area of responsibility.
- Leaders are not monitoring the progress of all disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs closely enough.
- Teaching is not good. Misconceptions are not always addressed in a timely manner and explanations of core concepts at times lack clarity.
- Teachers do not always plan work that challenges pupils and at times expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low.
- Not all pupils read frequently. This hinders the rate at which they acquire essential skills, knowledge and understanding.
- For some pupils progress is too slow, particularly in writing and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has successfully created a positive ethos that celebrates diversity and offers pupils a wealth of personal, social and emotional opportunities.
- Leaders are securing improved attendance and better punctuality which is enabling an enhanced equality of opportunity.
- Leaders are successfully narrowing gaps in reading, writing and mathematics for disadvantaged pupils across the school.
- Pupils are friendly and considerate. They consistently display insightful, compassionate attitudes to others and are very proud of each other’s accomplishments.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the effectiveness and impact of leadership and management by:
 - refining school improvement planning to ensure that priorities, expectations and lines of accountability are unambiguous and are wholly focused on outcomes for pupils
 - developing rigorous performance management systems that are transparent, personalised and clearly linked to improvement priorities
 - devising easy to understand and thorough systems that assess and monitor the progress of all groups of pupils more effectively
 - equipping subject leaders with the skills needed to accurately analyse the impact of initiatives and actions in terms of pupils' outcomes
 - increasing the contribution made by the wider leadership team in developing a more collective sense of accountability and ownership in the drive for improvement.

- Develop greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school, particularly in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all staff have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve, including those in the early years
 - giving all pupils opportunities to read and practise essential skills frequently
 - making sure that all staff have a secure understanding of how pupils learn and are skilled at introducing, explaining and demonstrating key concepts clearly and succinctly to pupils
 - addressing the inconsistency with which teachers intervene in a timely manner to address pupils' misconceptions
 - developing more consistency in the monitoring of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Senior leaders' actions and plans are not securing rapid enough improvement. This is because actions are not analysed in depth or detail to determine impact; plus, improvement plans are still too vague and not focused sharply enough on core priorities.
- The headteacher undertakes regular monitoring duties and is involving other leaders in this work more routinely. Following lesson observations teachers are given clear guidance on strengths and areas for development. At times, however, targets are repeated time and again and teachers are either not supported to improve or held accountable when they fail to do so.
- Wider leadership responsibilities have been developed and staff have taken more ownership of particular areas of development. These middle leaders have valued the professional development opportunities afforded them by the headteacher. This said, middle leaders do not yet have as positive an impact as they might on improvement because they are limited by the weaknesses in the school's assessment and tracking systems.
- Leaders plan interventions to provide support for pupils who need extra help and also for those pupils who could be further challenged. Because these interventions are not analysed effectively their impact on learning and progress is unclear. This means leaders cannot be assured that methods are successful.
- The local authority brokered the support of several outstanding and good schools including Cleves Cross Primary, Tudhoe Colliery Primary and Ramshaw Primary. The resultant contribution to improvement is clear. For example, several mathematics and writing initiatives gleaned from the partnerships have successfully raised the quality of some aspects of teaching and learning in these subjects.
- Subject leaders have also benefited from local authority support and the partnerships with other providers. They have had opportunities to observe lessons and monitor children's work, learning more about the role and responsibility of being a subject leader. However, they do not yet collate or analyse effectively the progress of groups of pupils in their area of responsibility. In addition, their contribution to improvement planning is limited.
- Support by the local authority to develop robust school improvement planning and self-evaluation, however, has been less successful as the quality and accuracy of both are lacking.
- Primary sport funding is used to good effect. Specialist sports coaches work to improve levels of fitness and develop skills. Several after-school clubs also have a positive effect on outcomes and the children value the opportunities they are given. The girl's football team were particularly proud of their hard-won trophy.
- Leaders also make effective use of the extra money from the government to support pupils who are disadvantaged. Because of their careful spending, gaps between this group of pupils and others have narrowed in both key stages and in the early years across reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leadership of the group of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is underdeveloped, meaning that not all pupils in this group are monitored closely enough to ensure that they are making the progress that should be expected of them. This results in underachievement for some.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors work regularly with school leaders and have a good understanding of their statutory duties. Several governors work in educational roles themselves. They visit school regularly and attend appropriate training. This means that they are well placed to interrogate the actions and impact of leadership. Weaknesses in improvement planning and assessment procedures mean that some of the information they are receiving is over-generous, inaccurate or too vague, lessening their ability to challenge effectively.
 - Governors are aware of the connections between pay and performance but since school leaders are at times presenting imprecise information governors are not always able to make reliably appropriate decisions.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. By way of example, the headteacher's decision to invest in an experienced and highly effective pupil welfare officer has resulted in improved attendance and punctuality. Recent training for staff has also ensured that staff are highly vigilant of pupils' emotional, social and personal needs.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Teaching is not consistently good. At times pupils do not get the helpful demonstration or clarity of explanation they need to understand the information or concept being taught. Furthermore, when pupils get things wrong or misunderstand teachers do not always intervene swiftly. This leads to pupils developing misconceptions or continuing poor practices.
- Teachers do not always plan work that challenges pupils to achieve their very best and at times poor-quality work or responses are accepted. Several pupils displaying impeccable handwriting at the beginning of the term were producing poorer-quality writing as the term progressed.
- Pupils are getting regular opportunities to write at length through the weekly 'Hot and Cold' writing tasks. Often good progress is visible in the quality of this work. At times though, teachers' expectations are too low and pupils employ vocabulary and skills that are not ambitious. Some Key Stage 2 pupils discussing powerful adjectives were offering words that should be expected of much younger learners.
- Teachers' use of pre- and post-assessments is helping to determine the strengths and needs of individuals in mathematics. This means teachers can plan work that matches pupils' abilities. Sometimes pupils are still engaging in work that is either too difficult or too easy for them. One group completed long lists of simple number calculations that were decidedly too easy for them while a group elsewhere completed a page of addition sums incorrectly.
- Teachers are not yet confident to use the school's new assessment and tracking systems to plan effectively for all groups of pupils. Lack of detail and clarity of information means teachers cannot always accurately identify the rate of progress that a pupil is making. This results in less than effective planning.
- Pupils are very pleased with some of the recent reading initiatives, the Reading Exchange and Request a Read. Teachers are aware that reading needs to be prioritised. Not all pupils have sufficient opportunities to read, though. Some say they read lots at home but do not always have time to read with an adult in school.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school and are eager to learn. Most work diligently in class and complete the work that is asked of them. Occasionally if work is too easy or too difficult, they display low-level disruptive behaviours and progress is inhibited.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The appointment of the pupil welfare officer has enabled positive and productive home-school links, resulting in improved attendance for girls and a reduced number of pupils who are persistently absent. Punctuality has improved and parents are held accountable for their children's attendance.
- The headteacher has successfully created a positive culture whereby safety and vigilance is always high on the agenda. Staff and governors use their recent safeguarding, child protection and 'Prevent' duty training to keep a watchful eye on pupils, maintaining an appropriate it-could-happen-here attitude at all times.
- The curriculum offers pupils the chance to explore contentious issues in a safe environment. Because of this pupils have a mature understanding of the world outside of school and have charitable and accepting views of the differences and similarities of people.
- Leaders and teachers prepare pupils well for later life. Engagement with projects such as 'Show Racism the Red Card' and 'What is Family?' are successfully developing fundamental British values. Pupils talk with compassion, maturity and acceptance of others. In discussing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender discrimination, pupils agree that people should be accepted for who they are.
- Leaders cast a wide net when it comes to promoting social, moral, spiritual and emotional values. Pupils, governors and parents recently explored diversity and equality using a range of texts such as *Bill's New Frock* by Anne Fine and *William's Doll* by Charlotte Zolotow, to elicit understanding and promote discussion. Discussion with pupils confirms the success of their commendable approach.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are unfailingly polite as they move around the school. They hold doors open for others and thank each other respectfully. The occasional low-level disruption in lessons where tasks are not closely matched to needs is easily addressed by attentive adults.

- Pupils present respectful attitudes to each other and to adults. Playtimes are happy affairs and pupils say incidents of poor behaviour are few and far between. They are confident that the school's well-embedded behaviour system positively rewards good behaviour and deals with misbehaviour appropriately. As one pupil said, 'you feel like you're noticed because you're good'.
- Pupils are happy to come to school, as the better than national attendance figures confirm. They say they have many friends in school and value the 'Buddies' that look out for them in the playground. Adults will listen and respond to their concerns and a family feel permeates lunchtimes.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Expectations at times are too low. Some pupils across ability groups make less progress than they should in lessons. Where this is the case, teachers are not demanding enough of pupils and are setting work that fails to inspire or challenge.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are not always supported effectively to make the progress that should be expected of them. Monitoring of this group is not undertaken thoroughly enough; therefore work is not always matched accurately to the needs of the pupils.
- Standards in Key Stage 2 in all subjects were broadly in line with national expectations in 2015. Most pupils make the progress that should be expected of them, particularly in writing and mathematics, and many make better than expected progress across subjects. Leaders have accurately identified reading in Key Stage 2 as an area to develop and monitor carefully.
- The gap between the achievements of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils narrowed in 2015. In reading, writing and mathematics, disadvantaged pupils made similar progress to other pupils nationally. Leaders follow the progress of this group of pupils carefully and quickly put support in place for those falling behind.
- Pupils in Year 1 achieve well in the national phonics test (learning the sounds that letters make). Those who need to retake the test in Year 2 also do better than others nationally. This is helpfully supporting the majority of pupils to achieve national standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 1.
- Key Stage 1 pupils attained significantly better standards than their peers nationally in writing in 2015. However, current work shows room for improvement as sometimes pupils are not challenged or supported to maintain the high standards of writing that should be expected of them across subjects.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Teaching is inconsistent. Where teaching is weakest, the intended learning is unclear or undemanding; explanations do not facilitate understanding and questions fail to challenge children. Progress is therefore too slow and the proportions of children reaching good levels of development too low.
- Not all children in the early years reach a good level of development. Children are not always given sufficient opportunities to practise and apply basic reading, writing and mathematics skills. For example, there are too few opportunities to read with adults. This means they are underprepared to access the National Curriculum in Key Stage 1.
- The progress of different groups of children is not always monitored carefully enough. Interventions put in place to help children catch up are not thoroughly analysed to check that they are having the intended effect. Because of this, teaching and learning activities are not always targeted accurately.
- A proportion of children enter the Reception class with skills and levels of development lower than those typically expected for their age. At times, teachers' low expectations lead to low levels of progress for this group – meaning some children are not catching up with others rapidly.
- Early years staff work in positive partnership with parents and go that extra mile to ensure children feel confident and secure. Prior to starting school all children are visited at home and frequent getting-to-know-you sessions within school thereafter create positive links. Parents are confident that their children are safe and well looked after.
- Teachers have adapted the early years provision indoors and outdoors to better reflect children's interests. Opportunities for children to write and read independently are offered through exciting projects. These developments are beginning to support increased engagement and better progress.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 123350 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 10002151 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 185 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jimmy Jamieson |
| Headteacher | John Trueman |
| Telephone number | 0191 373 0622 |
| Website | www.silvertreeprimary.co.uk |
| Email address | p3519.admin@durhamlearning.net |
| Date of previous inspection | 8 October 2013 |

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average primary school serving an area of high deprivation.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are few pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- There are slightly higher than average percentages of pupils who have support for special educational needs but lower than average numbers of pupils who have special educational statements of need or education, health and care plans.
- There is a breakfast club as well as after-school and lunchtime clubs which are managed by the governing body.
- The school is slightly less stable, in terms of its pupil population, than other schools nationally.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment in all classes. Several observations on the first day of the inspection were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised school information and documentation including: performance management information; teachers' planning; the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses; information on pupils' outcomes and progress; monitoring records for teaching and learning; minutes of the governing body meetings; attendance information and safeguarding documents.
- The work in children's books from all classes, including the early years, was scrutinised. One senior leader joined inspectors for part of this inspection activity.
- Discussions were held with groups of pupils. Informal conversations with pupils took place during lessons and at breaktimes. Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about homework.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and the school's own information about parents' opinions. Inspectors also spoke to parents informally at the start and end of the school day.

Inspection team

Fiona Manuel, Lead inspector

Lucie Stephenson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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