

# Highfield Community Primary School

Whinfield Way, Rowlands Gill, Tyne and Wear NE39 2JE

## Inspection dates

26–27 September 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher has maintained his passion and commitment to the school. He has a strong understanding of the pastoral needs of his pupils and their wider families.
- Senior leaders are equally committed and provide effective support to the headteacher. Collectively, they recognise that they did not respond quickly enough to the increased demands of the new national curriculum. This led to a decline in pupils' outcomes.
- Subject leaders are knowledgeable and use assessment information effectively to identify the priorities for further improvement. However, they are not playing a full enough role in quality assuring their work.
- Governors are skilled and offer challenge and support to school leaders. However, they have not ensured that improvement plans are sufficiently tightly linked to gains in pupils' outcomes for them to be evaluated precisely. Nor have they ensured that the school's website is compliant with statutory requirements.
- The curriculum is engaging for pupils and offers them many and varied experiences. However, it did not build pupils' knowledge and skills sequentially. Leaders have responded to this and produced detailed progression documents. It is too early to measure the effect of these on improving pupils' outcomes.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and enables pupils to make good progress. Teachers use pupils' assessment information to inform their planning and to adjust their teaching as required. However, there is more to do to ensure work is sufficiently demanding for the most able pupils.
- Although the teaching of phonics is effective, pupils' outcomes in the national Year 1 phonics screening check are variable. This is because pupils do not receive their entitlement to a daily phonics lesson.
- The early years leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching in the early years is good. Activities are engaging and enable children to make good progress from their often low starting points.
- Pupils behave well and are respectful of each other and of visitors to the school. They demonstrate good manners and are keen to offer a welcoming smile and hello.
- Pupils' outcomes are good, and their progress is improving. There is greater consistency in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. However, very few pupils achieve the higher standards with any degree of consistency, particularly in writing and mathematics.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - teachers provide work that challenges the most able pupils, including the disadvantaged most able pupils, so that they can reach the higher standards of which they are capable, particularly in writing and mathematics
  - the teaching of phonics happens daily and focuses more intently upon improving pupils' fluency.
- Improving the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - plans for improvement are sharply focused on the gains in pupils' outcomes desired, so that they can be evaluated precisely
  - subject leaders play a full part in school improvement activities, so that they can accurately evaluate the effectiveness of their work
  - the guidance for the progression of pupils' knowledge and skills in foundation subjects, such as history, geography and art, is embedded in all year groups
  - the school's website meets all statutory requirements, including the school's pupil premium strategy and the school's curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher's commitment to the school and his passion for ensuring that pupils are cared for and supported has not waned. He cares deeply about pupils' welfare and demonstrates a keen awareness of the community he serves. His actions to support pupils frequently go above and beyond that expected. Consequently, this is an inclusive school where all are welcomed, and pupils say that they feel happy and safe.
- Senior leaders are skilled practitioners. They work hard to support the headteacher. They identify clear priorities for the future and, like the headteacher, are ambitious for pupils' academic success. Collectively they recognise that they had not acted swiftly enough to ensure that the quality of teaching kept pace with the increased demands of the new national curriculum.
- Leaders, including governors, are realistic in their evaluation of their work and what is still to do. They accurately identified that the overall effectiveness of the school was no longer outstanding and have plans in place to steer future improvements. However, current plans are not sufficiently linked to the gains in pupils' outcomes that leaders wish for them to be evaluated precisely.
- At the last inspection, the school's curriculum was highly commended. Leaders have successfully maintained an interesting and engaging curriculum for pupils. However, until this school year topic plans did not reflect the increased demands of the national curriculum and did not build pupils' knowledge and skills sequentially. Leaders have sought to remedy this and have produced detailed progression documents to support teachers' planning. It is hoped that this will improve pupils' achievement further, but it is in the earliest stages of implementation and therefore too early to judge.
- A detailed programme of assemblies, combined with aspects of the personal, social, health and economic curriculum, contribute to pupils' understanding of British values and promotes their personal, social and emotional development successfully. The highly positive attitudes in the school demonstrate the emphasis on respect and equality that is engendered by all.
- Subject leaders are knowledgeable. They have used end-of-year assessment information to accurately identify clear priorities for improvement well. They have created action plans and guidance documentation to enable greater coherence and consistency to the quality of teaching across the school. However, their lack of involvement in measuring the impact of their work means that they are unable to evaluate effectively those actions that have been successful and those that need adjustment.
- Leaders, including governors, have a good understanding of the barriers to learning that some disadvantaged pupils experience. They use additional funding to reduce the effect of such barriers wherever possible, which means that, for the most part, disadvantaged pupils make progress like that of their peers. However, leaders have not always focused their spending as precisely as they should and have not ensured that the school website information is up to date and accurately evaluates the impact of their actions on improving disadvantaged pupils' outcomes.

- The school's physical education (PE) and sports fund is used effectively to broaden pupils' access to a range of different sports and increased access to sporting competition. In the last school year, all pupils in key stage 2 accessed after-school sports clubs, and all pupils in Year 6 achieved their 25 metres swimming award successfully.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has been in post for several years. She undertakes her role effectively and ensures that the early identification of pupils' additional needs is sharply focused to enable appropriate support to be organised. She has established effective relationships with a range of external agencies. She monitors the impact of additional support effectively to improve the outcomes of pupils with additional needs.
- The local authority has continued to visit the school. It provides regular and purposeful support to school leaders and has delivered aspects of staff training. Local authority officers supported senior leaders with the development of the school's curriculum progression documents.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors are fully involved in the life of the school and share the same commitment to ensure that pupils' welfare is at the heart of all decision making.
- Governors bring a range of skills to their role and use them effectively to undertake their detailed programme of monitoring to good effect. As a result, they have a strong understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- A review of governing body minutes shows that governors ask pertinent questions of school leaders and challenge them when appropriate. They use the knowledge gained from their monitoring activities to validate the information they receive effectively.
- Governors have not ensured that the school's website is maintained effectively in respect of the school's pupil premium strategy and the school's curriculum.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are aware of the important role they play in keeping pupils safe. Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular training and updates.
- Such is the effectiveness of procedures that, although facilities in the school are shared by two separate schools, movement around the school is seamless and visitors are managed well. Thorough checks are completed on the suitability of adults working at the school.
- Staff are vigilant in reporting their concerns about pupils' welfare. However, records do not fully reflect the actions leaders have taken. An electronic system has recently been purchased to enable leaders to better maintain their records. Even so, the full extent of the new system's functionality is yet to be utilised. Leaders are acting to tackle this.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching across the school is hallmarked by strong and positive relationships. Teachers set high expectations for pupils to work their hardest and they ensure pupils are supported to do so. Pupils, in return, are willing to share their thoughts and ideas and to work with one another.
- Assessment of pupils' learning is now accurate. Teachers use this information effectively to inform their planning and to adapt their teaching when required. As a result, pupils across the school are making good progress from their varied starting points. Additional support and intervention, when required, are timely and are matched to pupils' needs effectively.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving. In the past, teachers focused too heavily on teaching pupils' arithmetic skills, at the expense of developing pupils' mathematical fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills. The recently appointed mathematics subject leader recognised this and began to make much needed changes. One of his first actions was to produce a highly detailed calculations policy. This identifies the small steps needed in pupils' knowledge and skills to enable teachers to plan for lessons sequentially and with greater consistency than had previously been the case. As a result, pupils are now confident and increasingly accurate in completing number operations. This is evidenced in pupils' improving progress scores in the 2018 national statutory assessments at the end of key stage 2.
- However, leaders know there is more to do to improve pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills, which remain much weaker aspects of pupils' mathematical understanding. Too often pupils are asked to reason about their answers or complete problems as an extension activity, which means that pupils, particularly the most able, are not moved on to more demanding activities quickly enough. Over time, very few pupils have reached the higher standard with any degree of consistency. In 2018, no pupils achieved the higher standard at key stages 1 or 2.
- Approaches to the teaching of writing are consistent in that teachers look for creative ways to engage pupils in the writing process. For example, by using artefacts, film clips, or extracts from a range of highly appealing texts, teachers ensure that pupils have developed positive attitudes towards writing.
- Pupils are keen to write and understand that there are different styles of writing for different purposes. However, pupils are not yet sufficiently skilled in using a range of grammatical techniques to adjust the structure and organisation of their writing as a means of audience appeal. For example, a review of Year 6 independent writing showed pupils using interesting adjectives to add detail to their fictional monsters: 'The monster had red bulging eyes.' While the adjectives were thoughtful and improved the impact of the description, the sentence construction remained simple. This was typical of other work seen. Since the heightened challenge of the new national curriculum was introduced, although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing is in line with the national average, very few pupils have successfully achieved the higher standard at key stage 1, and no pupils have been able to do so at key stage 2.
- Teachers encourage pupils to read for pleasure. Investment in new reading material and the playground 'reading bus' have contributed to pupils' enjoyment of stories and

information texts. Pupils can talk about their favourite authors and can express preference. Leaders have been successful in promoting pupils' positive attitudes and enthusiasm for reading, which is leading to improving pupils' progress. However, leaders are fully aware that much of the teaching needs to focus on extending and deepening pupils' vocabulary, particularly technical words that are specific to different subjects.

- Teachers complete guided reading sessions daily. Activities are carefully matched to pupils' abilities and to the topic studied to ensure that pupils' learning is contextualised and appealing. Teachers' skilful use of questioning is effective in probing pupils' thinking and enabling pupils to draw meaning. For example, the word 'ambush' appeared in a text about dinosaurs. At first the pupils were struggling to gauge meaning, but through the teacher's careful questioning, pupils were able to link their knowledge of gaming and their understanding of the word 'ambush' to give related meaning to the context of the dinosaurs.
- Phonics teaching is consistent and is faithful to the school's scheme of choice. Over time, pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 screening check have been variable. In part, this is because teachers are not placing sufficient emphasis on developing pupils' fluency effectively, but more so because leaders have not ensured that all pupils receive their entitlement of a daily lesson of phonics consistently.
- The teaching of PE is a strength of the school. During their schooling, pupils experience a range of different sports and develop a range of skills. The PE leader ensures that all pupils have gained their 25 metres swimming award and all pupils in key stage 2 access an after-school sports club.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff care deeply for the pupils and this is demonstrated by the highly positive and caring attitudes of pupils and staff. As one pupil told the inspector, 'Teachers respect us, so we learn how to respect each other.'
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that there are no unsafe places in school. Pupils are confident that should they have any concerns they would be supported by a member of staff quickly and effectively. A review of records shows that although referrals made by staff are completed swiftly, leaders' responses are not recorded accurately and do not reflect precisely the chronology of actions taken.
- Pupils who spoke to the inspector demonstrated a good understanding of bullying in all its forms and were adamant that 'it doesn't happen here'. They could explain how to keep themselves safe when using the internet, but the older pupils were unsure of the changing dangers associated with the use of social media and gaming.
- Leaders have ensured that aspects of the curriculum and a detailed programme of assemblies supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development well. Leaders are in the process of supplementing their teaching of religious education so that it provides pupils with a deeper understanding of those of different faiths and

cultures, which reflects the changing context of the school.

- Pupils are given many opportunities to contribute to school life. Older pupils are given additional responsibilities, such as librarians, sports crew members – who organise playground games – and school council members. This contributes to pupils’ strong sense of belonging that embodies the school.
- Leaders emphasise the importance of physical fitness and healthy lifestyles because they realise the powerful impact this has on securing pupils’ emotional and mental well-being. A highly active cycle club has grown in recent years and has enabled pupils to experience marvellous cycling adventures such as the ‘coast 2 coast’ cycle route and a cycle holiday to Amsterdam. In addition, the PE subject leader has ensured all pupils in key stage 2 access an after-school sports club.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school’s behaviour rules are well embedded and pupils across the school are clear about teachers’ expectations for good manners and good behaviour. Such is the depth of pupils’ understanding that they are clear of the link between their rights and their responsibilities. Consequently, the school is a very happy place where pupils thrive.
- Playtimes are lively events and there is something to do for everyone. A state-of-the-art adventure playground, with climbing frame and zip wire, keeps the more active pupils engaged. This is supplemented by the ‘sports crew’ who ensure that there is plenty of smaller games equipment available for pupils to access. For those pupils requiring a less energetic and more relaxing breaktime, the Year 6 librarians open the reading bus to allow pupils to immerse themselves in the wide range of stories and non-fiction texts available. This leads to a harmonious playtime for all.
- Pupils are encouraged to work their hardest and to contribute to lessons. For the most part pupils respond to this appropriately and they take pride in the presentation of their work. Occasionally, when pupils are taught by temporary teachers, there is a marked decline in the quality of their presentation.
- Pupils’ overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average. This represents an increase in pupils’ absence since the last inspection. Leaders recognised this and have strengthened their procedures accordingly. Regularly held ‘attendance forums’ provide an opportunity for parents to share any concerns that they may have. Informal advice or ‘signposting’ often alleviates issues before they begin to adversely affect pupils’ attendance and punctuality. When this is unsuccessful, more formal procedures are instigated for any parent whose child is regularly absent from school. A review of individual case studies shows the positive effect leaders’ actions have on improving the attendance of pupils. Despite these actions, the proportion of pupils regularly away from school has increased. Leaders know this is an aspect of their work which requires the utmost vigilance.

**Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- The introduction of the new national curriculum and its heightened challenges affected pupils' outcomes because teachers were slow to make the required adjustments to their teaching. This led to variability in pupils' outcomes, which had previously been outstanding. More recent changes have stabilised current pupils' achievement at the expected standard and are leading to pupils' improving rates of progress.
- Leaders are aware that there is more to do to ensure that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are stretched and challenged to reach the higher standards that they are capable of with more consistency.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are well supported. In all year groups, a high proportion of pupils have complex additional needs. Over time, this has meant that staff have become highly skilled in identifying a range of additional needs and conditions. As a result, pupils who have SEN are identified early, and receive appropriate levels of support swiftly, to enable their good progress.
- Although the overall proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is higher than the national average, it can vary greatly within year groups. Occasionally, pupils who are disadvantaged also have SEN; this means that while their progress is similar to that of their peers, the standards reached are more variable. Leaders use additional funding to mitigate against this and to minimise any other barriers to learning pupils may experience.
- Pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 national phonics screening check are below the national average and show variability over time. This is because teachers do not focus their teaching sufficiently on improving pupils' fluency and because leaders have not ensured that all pupils receive their entitlement to a daily phonics lesson.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years leaders share a strong understanding of early childhood development. They have a clear overview of the strengths and areas for the provision that need to be improved further to ensure children make good progress and acquire the skills needed to be ready for Year 1.
- Children's outcomes are good. Most children enter school with skills below those typical for their age and stage of development. By the time they leave the Reception class, the majority of children have successfully achieved a good level of development, which is improving year-on-year. Occasionally, late arrivals into the year group impact negatively on overall outcomes.
- Leaders have secured accurate assessment of children's learning and use this effectively to inform planning and adjust provision. They have devised their own system to record and track children's assessment information to enable them to identify at a glance those children in need of additional support. Such support is then implemented quickly.
- Staff ensure that parents are increasingly included in their child's learning journey and offer lots of opportunities for parents to become more involved, such as the popular 'stay and play' sessions. However, website information is extremely limited and does not reflect the opportunities on offer.
- Teachers' combined wealth of experience and knowledge support the early



identification of any SEN or other complex needs. As a result, children receive appropriate support and advice in a timely way. Those parents who talked to the inspector spoke highly of the thoughtful advice and support they had received from school staff. This is more noticeable for children in Reception class.

- For the most part, teachers' plan activities that capture children's interests. This is particularly so in Reception class, where teachers' intuitive questioning extends children's learning successfully. However, it is less effective in Nursery, where teachers sometimes keep children too long at activities and are unable to quickly adapt when children's interests wane. When this happens, children's progress slows and learning is lost.
- Outdoor facilities and regular experience of the forest school facility supports children's social and physical development well. Children observed in the setting were self-regulating their behaviour and demonstrating high levels of curiosity in the world around them.
- Children behave well and are respectful of each other and their classrooms. This is because adults consistently model the behaviour they want to see and are highly skilled in managing those pupils who are at an earlier stage of personal and social development.
- The teaching of phonics is good overall. Children acquire early phonics skills effectively in Reception. However, they are not as advanced as they could be because there has been less emphasis placed on securing early letter sounds for those children in Nursery. This is now in hand.

## School details

Unique reference number	108351
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10047862

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Clydesdale
Headteacher	Steve Thompson
Telephone number	01207 549882
Website	<a href="http://www.highfieldprimarygateshead.co.uk/">www.highfieldprimarygateshead.co.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:stevethompson@gateshead.gov.uk">stevethompson@gateshead.gov.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	October 2013

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The overall proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is above the national average. This is also the case with regards to the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, although an increasing proportion of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- The school is housed within a private finance initiative build and shares its site and some facilities with another primary school.
- The school's website does not meet statutory requirements in respect of its pupil premium strategies and curriculum plans.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all classes and year groups. These observations were completed alongside the headteacher. During lesson observations, the inspector talked to some pupils about their learning and reviewed their work in books.
- Pupils were observed at playtime and lunchtime. The inspector talked to a group of pupils about their learning and listened to them read.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the governing body.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance; improvement plans; data on pupils' attainment and progress; attendance and behaviour records; safeguarding procedures; evaluations of the quality of teaching; and minutes of the governing body meetings and monitoring activities.

## Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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