

Brandon Primary School

Carr Avenue, Brandon, Durham, County Durham DH7 8NL

Inspection dates

12–13 February 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has continued to improve leadership and management at all levels. She has empowered a strong team of leaders, who are raising standards throughout the school.
- Outcomes are improving. Pupils get off to a good start in the early years. The progress made by pupils in key stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is increasingly strong.
- Most teaching is good. Teachers are well supported by senior leaders. Consequently, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to help pupils learn well.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Children gain a strong knowledge of phonics in the early years. This is developed effectively as they move through the school. As a result, the majority of pupils are confident readers. Pupils read widely at home and in the school.
- Leaders have developed effective systems for checking the progress made by pupils. Pupils receive effective support when they need it. There is little difference between the progress made by different groups of pupils, particularly in mathematics and writing.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils. It is enriched by a wide range of trips and sporting opportunities. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that pupils' knowledge and skills in subjects other than English and mathematics need to develop further.
- Governors monitor the school's work closely. They provide effective challenge and hold leaders to account.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in the school. They are polite and respectful of one another. Pupils are confident that staff will help them with any problems.
- Leaders are successfully reducing pupil absence. However, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent remains stubbornly high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the progress made by pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics by:
 - developing the sequence of learning in subjects such as science and geography so that pupils build on their prior knowledge and acquire new skills and understanding
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their subject knowledge in a range of different contexts.
- Continue to improve pupils' attendance and further reduce the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- After a period of staffing changes, the headteacher has established a capable leadership team. Together, they have ensured that the priorities identified for improvement in the previous inspection have been addressed. As a result, the quality of teaching in the school is strong. Pupils' progress is increasing rapidly.
- The headteacher has trained her leadership team well. They have a detailed knowledge of the school's performance, which they evaluate carefully. They make regular checks on the quality of teaching and the pupils' progress. Where they find inconsistencies in progress, they intervene promptly, providing effective support to ensure that improvements are made. Consequently, the progress made by all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have additional needs, is improving rapidly. Current pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders take the views of pupils seriously. The school council gives pupils a voice and plays an important role in decision making. Older pupils take responsibility for improving the school environment and for supporting younger pupils. Pupils have a clear understanding of democracy and social responsibility.
- Leaders use additional funding for pupils entitled to the pupil premium thoughtfully to address the social, academic and physical needs of individual pupils. Leaders also ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity. This ensures that all pupils can access residential visits and sporting events, or become involved in music lessons and school clubs. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is strong.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well provided for, because leaders make sure that additional funding for these pupils is spent appropriately. Leaders seek advice and training to help them plan effective support. They make thorough checks to ensure that the support is meeting pupils' needs. Pupils with SEND make good progress.
- Leaders have reviewed and adapted the mathematics and English curriculum to ensure that it is suitably challenging for pupils. They have established 'non-negotiables' for teachers, to ensure that expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high. To help pupils meet these expectations, leaders have set up a system that rewards positive attitudes to challenge. Pupils have responded well to this. They support each other in lessons and demonstrate genuine delight in the achievements of their peers.
- Leaders have also ensured that the curriculum is broad and is enriched by visits and visitors. Pupils are enthusiastic about topics such as 'the Egyptians'. They demonstrate a good factual knowledge of such topics, but leaders acknowledge that in some subjects the curriculum does not yet provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop and apply what they have been taught. Work to address this is underway.

Governance of the school

- Governors are highly effective. They are ambitious for the school and its pupils. They have significant and relevant expertise, which they use to ensure that standards continue to rise.
- Governors know the school well and play a significant role in improving standards. Governors visit the school regularly to understand the work of school leaders. They maintain an oversight of standards and provide support and challenge to the work of the headteacher and her leadership team. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that governors use their knowledge of the school to challenge leaders and ensure that improvement continues.
- Governors make regular and effective reviews of the progress that the headteacher is making towards raising standards in the school. They have strong capacity to do this because they have a detailed knowledge of school performance. As a result, there is strong professional discussion between the headteacher and the school governors.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. This has led to a strong culture of safeguarding and highly effective systems.
- Procedures for recruitment are thorough. Systematic checks are made on adults who work in, or visit, the school. Regular training ensures that members of staff know precisely what actions to take if they have a concern about a child's safety. Systems for reporting and monitoring concerns about pupils' safety are clear and effective. As a result, leaders' actions in response to concerns about the safety of pupils are timely. Leaders keep good records of the action they take to protect pupils and ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are fit for purpose.
- Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils are safe, inside and outside the school. Where the response from external agencies is slow, leaders are persistent in following up concerns.
- Pupils make a significant contribution to the strong culture of safeguarding that exists within the school. For example, pupils who are elected to the 'mini police' help to ensure that pupils play safely and that the local environment is safe for pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders provide effective support and advice to teachers to help them to improve their practice. They check the quality of teaching regularly. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- Leaders provide high-quality training for staff. This has improved teachers' subject knowledge and raised expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Teachers plan learning and use questions very effectively to develop pupils' understanding of English and mathematics.

- Teachers plan learning activities thoroughly. This is supported by a set of curriculum targets, developed by the school, that enable teachers to assess pupils' attainment. As a result, pupils extend their English and mathematics skills through a sequence of logical steps that build upon their prior knowledge and understanding. In lessons, pupils know exactly what is expected of them, because teachers explain tasks clearly and provide pupils with detailed information about how to succeed.
- Teachers identify quickly pupils who are at risk of falling behind. The additional support they then provide is well matched to pupils' needs. As a result, these pupils catch up quickly.
- There is a well-developed culture of reading. Adults build children's knowledge of phonics systematically in the early years. There are plenty of opportunities for children to read with staff. Younger pupils use their knowledge of phonics to decode and read new words. Weaknesses in the teaching of reading that led to poor outcomes in phonics in 2018 have been addressed. As a result, the vast majority of pupils in key stage 1 are now working at the expected standard in phonics.
- Reading is fostered effectively in key stage 2. Teachers ensure that pupils read suitably challenging books at the school and at home. The school's reading rewards scheme motivates pupils to read regularly. All groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are enthusiastic about their reading. They are keen to talk about the books they read. Pupils' understanding of texts and the fluency with which they read is improving rapidly.
- Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge of mathematics by solving problems. Pupils' skills in solving these tricky problems are improving, and pupils' progress is accelerating. However, opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge in subjects such as science and geography are not as well developed as they are in mathematics and English.
- Teachers develop pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills well. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and teach these skills systematically. All groups of pupils make good progress in their writing. Pupils have regular opportunities to write at length across the curriculum.
- Pupils respond positively to teachers' advice about how to improve their work. They readily commit to making these improvements. As a result, pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning.
- Pupils' work is tidy and well presented. Their handwriting skills are well established by the end of key stage 1. Pupils strive to meet teachers' high expectations, and they take justifiable pride in their work.
- Leaders have reviewed the school's homework policy so that homework is more engaging for pupils. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to choose their homework tasks. They are proud of the research and design tasks they have undertaken. For instance, pupils were keen to show inspectors canopic jars and pyramids they had made at home as part of a topic on the ancient Egyptians. This homework had clearly enthused them about the subject.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' personal development is based on the school's motto of 'Believe, Succeed, Achieve, Inspire'. Their understanding of these values is developed through assemblies and through the curriculum.
- Pupils strive to live up to these values. They are keen to succeed in lessons and are quick to improve their work in response to the advice of teachers. Opportunities for pupils to succeed outside their lessons are well provided for by a very wide range of clubs and events. For example, at the time of the inspection, pupils in the school's performing arts club were putting on a show for parents at a theatre in Durham.
- Pupils' sense of social responsibility is well developed. Older pupils take on a wide range of responsibilities. Some work regularly with community police to resolve issues in the community, such as dog fouling and unsafe parking. Other pupils undertake studies of safety within the school and they work with staff to develop anti-bullying strategies. At breaktimes, these pupils take their anti-bullying and safety roles seriously. Their work is valued by other pupils.
- Pupils have a strong voice in the school. Through elections for the school council and house captains, they are beginning to understand the democratic process.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. There are occasional instances of bullying, but pupils are confident that staff deal with these instances effectively. The vast majority of parents and carers say that their children are happy and safe at the school.
- The curriculum offers regular opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe indoors and outdoors. All pupils are confident about how to stay safe online and how to stay healthy.
- A good range of trips, residential visits and activities contribute well to pupils' personal development and awareness of the world. Pupils set up various enterprises to raise funds for residential trips and thus reduce the cost for all pupils. In doing so, they improve their understanding of the value of money. Opportunities, such as visiting the theatre and working with visitors from Durham University, encourage pupils to have high aspirations. One pupil told inspectors: 'You need to have good attendance and work hard at school if you want to get a degree.'
- Pupils are made aware of the diversity of modern Britain through their trips and visits, and through the curriculum. Pupils visit places of religious significance such as the Central Mosque and the Sikh temple in Newcastle. Pupils regularly visit the local church for celebrations, festivals and services. In lessons, pupils study a range of religions and national events such as Remembrance Day. In assemblies, pupils learn about celebrations and festivals from around the world.
- Sport has a high profile at the school. Regular active participation in lessons is well supplemented by after-school sporting activities and wider competitive sports for boys and girls.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff have established strong routines which ensure that the school is a calm, orderly environment.
- The well-attended breakfast club has a positive atmosphere in which pupils of all ages make a good start to the school day. The behaviour of pupils during breaktimes is good, because the school grounds offer a wide variety of play and learning opportunities.
- Pupils behave well in the vast majority of lessons and when they are outside their classroom. Approaches to managing pupils' behaviour are effective, so incidents of poor behaviour are isolated to a small number of pupils.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They take pride in their work and try hard to improve it. Pupils are keen to respond and share their views when teachers ask questions.
- Over time, the overall attendance of pupils has been below the national average. The proportion of pupils missing school regularly has been above the national average. Attendance is now improving, because leaders are checking absence more effectively and being more assertive with families. However, the proportion of pupils who regularly miss school, although reducing, remains stubbornly high.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over time, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 has been broadly average. This represents good progress from their often-lower starting points. However, in 2017, pupils' progress in key stage 2 was not good and it fell even further in 2018. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined by the end of Year 6 was low compared to that seen nationally.
- Leaders have responded swiftly to turn this poor performance around. They have improved the precision with which learning is planned. They make thorough and careful checks on the quality of teaching and provide effective support for teachers. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the progress made by current pupils. Pupils in key stage 2 are now making good progress.
- Leaders ensure that writing and mathematics lessons are well-planned and build on pupils' prior knowledge. As a result, pupils make strong progress from their different starting points. Evidence in pupils' books indicates that an increasing proportion of pupils are reaching the higher standards by the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- Leaders have established effective systems for identifying pupils who are at risk of falling behind in their work. These pupils are given effective support. As a result, the majority catch up quickly. This is having a positive effect on the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.
- Over time, the proportion of key stage 1 pupils attaining the required standard in the phonics screening check has been broadly in line with the national average. However, in 2018, the proportion of pupils attaining the required standard fell well below the national average. Leaders have addressed this. Pupils now make strong progress in

their understanding of phonics throughout the early years and key stage 1. Pupils who did not attain the required standard in phonics in 2018 are catching up quickly.

- Teachers ensure that pupils read regularly and widely. In school, pupils choose books that build their reading skills sequentially. Pupils have regular opportunities to develop their vocabulary and their inference skills. As a result, the progress made by current pupils in reading is strong.
- In most classes, and in most subjects, disadvantaged pupils make progress at a similar rate to that of their peers. Leaders constantly seek to improve outcomes for these pupils through careful analysis of their needs, followed by effective support.
- The progress of pupils with SEND is broadly in line with that of other pupils in the school. Teachers ensure that activities are well matched to the needs of these pupils. Progress for some pupils with SEND in key stage 1 has been weaker over time, but it is improving due to focused action by leaders.
- In some subjects, such as science and geography, the progress made by pupils is less rapid than it is in English and mathematics. This is because pupils get fewer opportunities to deepen their understanding by building on their prior knowledge and applying it to different contexts.

Early years provision

Good

- The strengthened school leadership team has provided effective support to the early years leader. The leadership of the early years is effective and the progress made by children is improving at a good rate.
- Through weekly meetings, the early years leader ensures that her whole team is involved in planning and developing the early years curriculum. She makes decisions based on national and international research, and she makes thorough and careful checks on the quality of provision. As a result, her actions are well informed and result in strong improvements.
- The early years leader has made the improvement of children's reading, writing and mathematics skills a high priority. She has ensured that highly effective adult-led sessions improve children's knowledge of phonics and mathematics. Other adult-led sessions are improving children's fine-motor skills. This is supporting rapid improvement in children's handwriting.
- In addition to high-quality adult-led sessions, children in the early years benefit from a range of well-planned activities that they can access independently. Through these activities, children successfully build their knowledge of the world and develop their understanding of reading, writing and mathematics. Adults provide very effective support that challenges children to extend their learning, although this is less well developed in the outdoor environment. The early years leader is addressing this inconsistency through staff training.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength in the early years. Staff have secure subject knowledge. They explain new learning clearly and ask questions that extend children's understanding. Consequently, children readily apply their knowledge and skills when reading and writing. The sustained progress that they make in writing is evident at the

entrance to the early years, where children write their names as they enter. Their previous efforts are all on display and their rapid progress is apparent.

- Opportunities for children to develop their skills in mathematics are embedded throughout the early years provision. Many children freely choose number activities when they are not working with adults. Several children in the Reception class can count and recognise numbers to 100. The most able children can correctly add larger numbers.
- A high proportion of children enter nursery with communication and physical skills that are low for their age. Staff are quick to identify children who might benefit from specialist support. The early years leader works closely with the specialist support teams to ensure that learning meets the needs of all groups of children. She has ensured that staff are trained to support children with speech and language difficulties. These children make good progress.
- The early years leader has made sure that the curriculum provides children with plenty of opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain and diverse cultures. For example, children make poppies for Remembrance Day, learn about the celebrations of Diwali and make regular visits to the local church. At the time of inspection, children had been learning about Chinese New Year. They had made lucky envelopes and were making 'Chinese food' by shaping dough.
- Staff in the early years build strong relationships with parents. Regular 'stay and play' and 'stay and learn' sessions allow parents to be involved with their children's learning. Several parents told inspectors that they use the ideas from these sessions at home.
- The early years leader and her staff have created a safe environment for children to learn. Routines are well established and there is a strong sense of mutual respect between staff and children. Children settle quickly into the early years and develop positive attitudes. They work well together, help each other and speak confidently to adults and visitors. By the time they reach the end of their time in early years, children are well prepared for Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	135207
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10059078

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beverley Sheratt
Headteacher	Judith Hodgson
Telephone number	0191 3780124
Website	www.brandonprimaryschool.co.uk/
Email address	brandon@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	3 May 2018

Information about this school

- Brandon Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is slightly below average.
- Children attend the Nursery on either a part-time or full-time basis.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons across all phases of the school, including the early years. A number of visits to lessons were undertaken jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. During observations, inspectors looked at pupils' books and talked to pupils to evaluate the quality of their current work. In addition, inspectors scrutinised, in detail, a sample of books containing work from English and mathematics and the wider curriculum. Inspectors also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors observed and spoke with pupils before school and at breaktime and observed their behaviour and conduct around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, phase leaders, the early years leader, the special educational needs coordinator and a group of teachers. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils, a group of governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, assessment information, performance management documents and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors looked at records of attendance and behaviour, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the 82 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View. Inspectors also spoke with parents before school. In addition, inspectors took account of over 150 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Ian Dawson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Olie Flitcroft	Ofsted Inspector
Geoff Dorrity	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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