

Wearhead Primary School

Wearhead, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL13 1BN

Inspection dates

10–11 July 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The recently appointed headteacher leads the school with skill, determination and a clear moral purpose.
- Pupils are impeccably behaved. Relationships among pupils and between adults and pupils are thoughtful, kindly and respectful.
- Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum. They have opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects such as Spanish, art and religious education. They make good progress.
- This 'formal' curriculum is underpinned by many extra-curricular activities open to all. These include sports, the arts and regular trips. Pupils enjoy and appreciate these.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff receive appropriate, up-to-date training. This ensures that they have the skills to keep pupils safe.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. They appreciate the care, open communication and the range of opportunities that the school offers their children.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar, and often better, progress than their peers. This is because staff know their needs very well and remove barriers to success wherever they can.
- Children in early years make good progress. They develop positive attitudes to learning.
- The headteacher and the governors have an accurate and detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and next steps. They evaluate its performance accurately.
- Governors are determined and skilled. They know well the school and the community it serves. They are very effective in supporting and holding the headteacher to account.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They learn how to manage potential risks to their safety and well-being.
- Overall attendance is good and above the national average.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well developed through the curriculum and other opportunities provided by the school.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do well because of the well-led, focused work of the school.
- Reading is a developing strength. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to explore and deepen their reading. Also, early reading needs to be further focused so that the most able make more rapid progress.
- Teaching is generally good. However, opportunities are missed to develop and extend pupils' learning and the detail, accuracy and presentation of their writing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the whole-school approach to reading, by:
 - further focusing the teaching of early reading so that pupils have even more opportunities to read to and with adults, at home and at school, so that they grow in confidence and delight in reading
 - identifying further opportunities for pupils across the school to read widely and in a range of genres so that they broaden their experience of, and love of, reading even further.
- Further develop the opportunities that pupils have to take charge of their own learning so that, as they mature, they are increasingly less reliant on adults in exploring, extending and deepening their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed headteacher leads with skill, quiet determination and a real sense of moral purpose. He knows the pupils and the community the school serves well. He is determined that every pupil will do well and receive an education of high quality. He is clear about what needs to be done to further improve the school.
- The headteacher has put together careful and detailed systems for monitoring the progress of pupils. As a result, information about pupils' strengths and areas for further development are increasingly being used to focus teaching. These findings also form the basis of the more regular reporting of progress to parents. Parents welcome this.
- Staff morale is high. This is because the headteacher and governors are open and engage closely with staff, working with them in the best interests of the pupils. All staff that the inspector spoke with talked about their enthusiasm and dedication to the school.
- Pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum that helps them to acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in a wide range of subjects. It also contributes to their physical, mental and personal well-being. There are also a wide range of extra-curricular activities available that complement and underpin the 'taught' curriculum. These take the form of trips, after-school activities and residential experiences. Pupils say that these experiences are a real strength of the school.
- The school makes very good use of the additional funding for sport and physical education. Sports coaches have worked alongside staff to provide additional expertise within lessons. The funding has also been used to enable pupils to play games against, and with, other schools. The school takes advantage of every opportunity available for pupils to extend their experience of sports, taking a full part and, wherever possible, excelling.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and acknowledge the very positive effect that the staff have on their children's learning and well-being. All of those who made their views known say that their children are well looked after, happy, and make good progress.
- The headteacher and governors ensure that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils by removing, as far as is possible, barriers to learning and well-being. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make strong progress.
- The additional funding for pupils with SEND is used effectively. This aspect of the school's work is well led by the headteacher. He works closely with staff, making regular checks to review the effect of support, adjusting where necessary. Links with parents are strong. As a result, pupils with SEND make good progress from their individual starting points.
- The school is well supported by the local authority. The authority provides regular support to help assure the quality of education.

Governance of the school

- Governance is very effective. It is very well led. Governors provide good levels of support and challenge to school leaders. They have an accurate and realistic view of the school and understand the school's priorities for improvement.
- The headteacher provides governors with high-quality, detailed information about how well the school is doing. However, governors do not rely on this alone to make their judgements. Governors visit the school regularly to gain a first-hand view of the school's work. As a result, they know how teaching has improved and the effect that this has had on pupils' progress and attainment. Along with the headteacher, governors help to ensure that staff have access to appropriate support and training.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The procedures for checking the suitability of visitors and for staff recruitment are fit for purpose and secure. Leaders check staff's suitability to work with children robustly.
- Leaders maintain a culture in the school where staff show a clear understanding of their responsibilities and of the processes that keep pupils safe. As a result, staff promptly identify and appropriately support potentially vulnerable pupils. They also engage effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the support they need.
- Pupils have many opportunities to learn how to stay safe, for example, in class time, through assemblies and regular visits from outside speakers. Pupils told the inspector that they regularly learn about how to stay safe online and when out and about in the community.
- Pupils told the inspector that they can go to any member of staff if they have any concerns. They are confident that adults would listen to their concerns and take prompt and appropriate action. Pupils are very appreciative of the way adults at the school take care of them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff display strong subject knowledge. They know their pupils very well. They plan learning which builds on what pupils already know and understand. They monitor pupils' progress carefully. As a result, those at risk of falling behind are given additional support quickly. Detailed use of assessment, including that of pupils with SEND, ensures that learning is typically well matched to pupils' needs.
- Staff use questioning effectively. This helps ensure that pupils develop and deepen their learning. For example, in a history lesson the teacher used a range of effective questioning techniques to help pupils recall what they already knew about Isaac Holden. Pupils then went on to put together questions that they would pose to the philanthropist in a future session.
- Relationships across the school among pupils and between adults and pupils are

relaxed and respectful. As a result, the classroom environment for learning is effective. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They want to do well and, because teachers' expectations are generally high, they do so.

- The headteacher has worked effectively to improve the quality of mathematics teaching. An extensive review of mathematics workbooks undertaken during the inspection showed that number and calculation skills are taught well across the school. This helps pupils develop their tenacity and skill in solving increasingly complex problems.
- Parents receive regular updates from the school about how well their children are doing. As well as the regular written reports, staff are readily available if parents wish to talk about a particular issue. The headteacher has recently streamlined the ways the school keeps parents informed about their children's progress. Reports are now more frequent and focused. Evidence from the school's own surveys show that parents welcome this.
- The inspector spoke with a large cross-section of parents. All were very positive about the school and commented on how much their children enjoyed learning. They said that communication between home and school was very good and that they had many opportunities to discuss their children's progress with staff.
- Staff follow the school's feedback procedures and pupils are given time to respond positively to staff. They use staff's useful comments to develop and deepen their skills so that they do better next time. As a result, they make generally good progress.
- The interesting and varied curriculum is imaginatively taught. Pupils have workbooks in a range of subjects, including art and religious education. Evidence from a scrutiny of these books from across the curriculum show pupils, especially the most able, writing at length and in a range of styles to suit the subject and audience.
- The 'formal' curriculum is underpinned by a range of in-school and extracurricular activities and trips. For example, using Arts Council England funding, pupils worked together with a professional animator to make their own animation called 'The Lost Crocodile'. This catalogues the adventures of a crocodile lost in the wilds of Weardale!
- While teaching is generally good, pupils' books and other inspection evidence shows that opportunities are missed to develop and extend pupils' learning and the detail, accuracy and presentation of their writing.
- Phonics is taught well. Children from early years onwards make good progress in their reading because of the skilled support they receive from staff. Across the school, pupils are increasingly having more opportunities to read high-quality books and texts. Pupils say that they enjoy this. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils, particularly the most able, to extend and deepen their independent reading.
- Pupils love to learn and enjoy school. However, they are not given enough opportunities to develop their independence as learners. Too often they are over-reliant on adults and not encouraged, especially as they grow in maturity as learners, to develop and explore knowledge and skills on their own.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are kind and highly alert to the needs of others. They get on well with each other and with staff. They spoke enthusiastically to the inspector about how well the staff care for them. They know that staff at the school would be there for them if they ever had a problem.
- Pupils take very good care of the school and of each other. There are many attractive and informative displays, both in and out of the classroom, that help pupils understand and celebrate their place in the school, the community and the wider world. There is no litter.
- Pupils feel safe, and are safe. Because of the school's actions, they know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations including when they are online and in or near water. Pupils told the inspector that there was no bullying at the school. They do, however, know what bullying is and the forms that it can take.
- Pupils are very aware that variety and difference bring vitality and wisdom to society. Staff ensure that there are many opportunities, in lessons, through trips and in assembly and daily acts of worship, to explore and celebrate diversity. From their earliest years, children develop high levels of empathy and understanding of each other because of the detailed and imaginative way the school fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. They are very well prepared for their next steps in learning and for life in modern Britain.
- Eating lunch together is a highlight of the school day. The school actively promotes a healthy lifestyle. Meal choices are healthy. Pupils know what constitutes a healthy diet. They also know the importance of welcoming guests and including everyone in the to and fro of conversation around the table.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils behave impeccably around the school and in the playground. Staff expectations are very high, and pupils rise to these expectations. Pupils reported that the school's systems to support and reward positive behaviour work well and are enjoyable. They like getting reward stamps.
- Pupils like coming to school. Pupils' overall attendance is above the national average. The attendance of the very small minority of pupils who are persistently absent is also above the national average. Records show that the school's work to improve rates of attendance are effective. Pupils are very clear about why it is important to attend school regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- This is a very small school. As a result, differences in the performance of small numbers of pupils have a significant effect on results over time.
- Over time, from their various starting points, children have made good progress in early years. Evidence from this inspection shows that Reception children make very good progress from their starting points because of the carefully targeted work of staff. In both Nursery and Reception, children settle quickly and are safe and happy because of the care and challenge of staff. They get off to a very good start.
- The number of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 differs from year to year. Direct evidence from this inspection shows that pupils are taught to read with care and precision. They like reading and engaging with books. They take real pleasure in learning and applying new sounds in their reading.
- Mathematics across the school is improving rapidly because of the work of the headteacher and staff. There is clear evidence of fluency among pupils in mathematical skills and operations. There is also growing evidence of the application of these skills in open-ended tasks and 'real life' mathematical problems.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils is small. They make very good progress from their starting points. All staff are aware of the needs and barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. Teaching is carefully focused on supporting them. Inspection evidence and the school's own information show that, over time, disadvantaged pupils make at least similar progress to, and often better progress than, their peers.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points. This is because the work they are given to do is carefully focused on what they need to learn to succeed. The school also works very closely and in partnership with these pupils' parents.
- An extensive scrutiny of current pupils' books in all years shows that pupils, particularly the most able, make good progress in a wide range of subjects. They have opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects. There is evidence of the use of sketch maps in geography and of the presentation of data in science. However, there is some variability in the presentation of pupils' work because of variability in teachers' expectations of what is well-presented work.

School details

Unique reference number	114065
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10087655

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Natalie Dalton
Headteacher	Tim Hiley
Telephone number	01388 537265
Website	www.wearhead.durham.sch.uk
Email address	wearhead@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	October 2012

Information about this school

- Wearhead school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. As a result, there are very few pupils in each year group. There is a class comprising of Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 and a class comprising of Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.
- All pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The school runs an after-school club.
- The school provides up to six Nursery places in flexible morning, afternoon and all-day provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all classes across the school. Almost all these lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher. The inspector listened to pupils read from Years 1 and 2. He also talked with pupils across the school about their experience of reading, both in and out of school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, and members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. The inspector spoke with an officer from Durham local authority on the telephone.
- The inspector reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including that related to safeguarding, achievement, the quality of teaching, and attendance and behaviour.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour and conduct at breaks and lunchtimes. He spoke informally with pupils about their experience and attitudes to school during these times. The inspector also spoke more formally with a group of key stage 2 pupils about school and the range of opportunities it offered them to explore and enjoy learning.
- The inspector took part in and observed two daily acts of worship.
- The inspector scrutinised a very wide sample of pupils' work from the current academic year from all year groups and in a range of subjects.
- The inspector spoke with five parents and carers at the start of the two school days to seek their opinions of the school's work and care for their children. He also reviewed responses to the school's own recent survey of parents' views.

Inspection team

Mark Evans, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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