

Inspection of a good school: Finchale Primary School

Canterbury Road, Newton Hall, Durham, County Durham DH1 5XT

Inspection dates:

6–7 November 2019

Outcome

Finchale Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time at Finchale Primary School. This is a school that goes above and beyond to provide many rich and varied experiences. The headteacher is passionate that every child will find their talent, be it drama, music, art or sport.

Parents and carers appreciate the nurturing environment that the school provides for its pupils. They say that communication is good. Parents believe their children get off to a flying start from the beginning of Reception. They appreciate the extra help that the school offers, for example parent workshops, which help them support their children to learn phonics.

Pupils are listened to. They proudly talk about the reading rooms that they have had a hand in designing for both key stage 1 and key stage 2 playgrounds.

Behaviour is a strength of the school. Pupils say that bullying rarely happens. However, they are confident that adults would listen and help them if there was a problem. Pupils are happy and safe.

There is a real sense of community. Pupils have pride in their school and enjoy a number of special roles and responsibilities, for example as playground buddies, the PE crew and lunchtime table monitors. They take these jobs very seriously.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Subject leaders have looked carefully at how the curriculum is organised. They have introduced a number of changes this term. The school's new curriculum is well designed. It clearly sets out the skills and knowledge that pupils should learn in each subject. The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

This work is already beginning to have an impact. For example, in history, pupils have a good sense of chronology. In Year 2, pupils know that Hadrian's Wall was built by the

Romans and is older than the Penshaw Monument. Pupils can see links in their learning and between the periods they have studied. In Year 5, they can compare life in Anglo-Saxon times to the Viking period. Pupils are starting to think like historians. They can examine primary sources of evidence and question its reliability.

Leaders know that this new approach to the curriculum needs embedding. Subject leaders are considering ways to check what pupils know and what they have learned. Pupils' workbooks show high-quality learning across the curriculum. However, high standards in handwriting and presentation are not consistent in every class.

Pupils work hard in lessons. They are respectful to all adults in school and their classmates. No learning time is lost because of poor behaviour. Pupils at Finchale are eager to learn.

Pupils are enthusiastic about the new mathematics curriculum. They find practical resources, such as counters and tens frames, helpful when learning new skills. Pupils like their new workbooks. These give them the opportunity to practise their number work. They can then apply this knowledge to problem-solving examples. When faced with a new challenge, most pupils know how they can build upon what they have already learned. A small number of pupils find these challenges difficult. This is because they have gaps in their knowledge and mathematical understanding.

Staff and pupils share a love of reading. Pupils talk knowledgeably about their favourite authors and books. From Reception, no time is lost in helping children learn to read. Teachers are highly trained in the teaching of phonics. Children who need a little extra help are quickly identified. This is to ensure they get the support that they need to keep up with their classmates. Every child has a reading book to take home matched to the sounds they are learning.

Pupils do well in reading at key stage 1. In 2018, pupils made disappointing progress in key stage 2. School leaders promptly rose to this challenge. They introduced a new approach to the teaching of reading. There is now a consistent approach to the teaching of reading skills, such as inference and deduction. Consequently, reading results improved in 2019.

A lot of learning takes place outside the classroom and beyond the school day. The school offers a wide variety of after-school activities, such as gardening club, choir and enterprise club. Leaders and staff are committed to developing pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles. The school offers a number of sports activities, including Finchale Family Fitness Jiggly Jog, for all the family.

Pupils experience a broad range of cultural experiences across the region, for example singing in Durham Cathedral and performing at The Sage. The school has a number of international partnerships with schools in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Mozambique. Pupils see themselves as global citizens.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. Clear procedures are in place for reporting concerns.

Leaders know how and when to make referrals for pupils. They are proactive in seeking support and advice from other professionals to ensure appropriate action is taken.

The curriculum helps pupils to stay safe. Pupils can explain when it is not appropriate to share personal information online and why they must always report any worries they have.

Appropriate recruitment checks are carried out to ensure all adults are suitable to work in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Planning for subjects such as history is well developed. Leaders are now focusing their attention on other foundation subjects. The school's curriculum intent and implementation need to be embedded securely and consistently across the school. Leaders have clear plans to ensure this is completed.
- The revised approaches to the teaching of mathematics are beginning to have a positive effect. Leaders need to ensure that the mathematics curriculum and new resources help close gaps in pupils' learning. This will enable all pupils to successfully tackle mathematical problems and develop their mathematical reasoning.
- Leaders' approaches to developing ways of checking that pupils remember important knowledge are developing. Subject leaders need to develop a system of assessment across foundation subjects to ensure that pupils are knowing more and remembering more. Leaders are aware that these developments need to be manageable for staff.
- Expectations of the quality of handwriting and presentation are not high enough. Leaders need to check that these aspects are of a consistently high standard across all subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2015.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	130312
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10059121
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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Amanda Hopgood
Headteacher	Sandra Whitton
Website	www.finchale.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 January 2015

Information about this school

- Wraparound care is available on site, provided by the Canterbury Kids Club. This provision is run separately to the school.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, I met with the headteacher, senior leaders for English, mathematics and history, and the school's special educational needs coordinator. I met with the local authority adviser and 10 governors, including the chair of the governing body. Discussions were also held with a number of teachers and support staff.
- The quality of education was inspected by visiting lessons, meeting with a range of pupils and staff, looking at pupils' work and examining curriculum documentation. I looked closely at reading, mathematics and history.
- I considered the views of parents through face-to-face discussions and via the 69 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey that were received.
- I listened to six pupils read. I observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, moving around school and on the playground. I met with pupils formally to gather their opinions and held informal discussions across both days of the inspection.

Inspection team

Andy Jones, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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