

Inspection of Heighington Church of England Primary School

Hopelands, Heighington, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 6PH

Inspection dates: 10–11 December 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong inclusive ethos that reflects the Christian values of the school. Pupils are proud of their school and welcome all visitors with warm smiles. They are polite and respectful.

Lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils are keen to contribute, and have positive attitudes to their learning. They want to do well and respond positively to teachers' instructions. Pupils say that they enjoy learning. They particularly say how much they enjoy their learning in mathematics. Occasionally, some pupils lack focus in their learning. This is linked to activities that are not always well matched to pupils' needs. Some teachers are not always quick to pick up on this.

Pupils say that it is easy to make friends. At playtimes, pupils can sit at the 'friendship bench'. They say that if you sit on it, there is always someone who is eager to invite you to join their games.

There are plenty of after-school clubs for pupils to access, particularly linked to their interests in sport and music.

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

The trust provides effective support to school leaders, including governors. It has been especially helpful to the recently appointed headteacher. She has reorganised the leadership structure of the school, establishing clear lines of accountability. She has also instigated a curriculum review, and appointed several new subject leaders. This is bringing about rapid improvements.

Children get off to a great start with their early reading. In Reception, children access lots of stories and rhymes. The environment is vibrant. A reading corner contains well known stories for children to use. Children get a daily phonics lesson. They learn how to use their phonics knowledge to read and spell. By the time children leave Reception, they have a secure phonics knowledge. Daily phonics lessons continue into key stage 1. By the time pupils leave key stage 1, they have all reached the phonics screening check standard. Pupils practise their reading with books that are well matched to their phonics knowledge. Phonics lessons in key stage 1 contain all the required elements. Some staff have not had recent training. Their approaches are not always in keeping with those of the scheme of choice. Leaders have already organised refresher training for staff.

The subject leader for mathematics has developed a clear and progressive scheme for mathematics. It introduces new skills and knowledge in a logical sequence. Teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. Pupils get lots of opportunities to re-visit and practise their skills. Pupils can relate prior learning from previous lessons to current learning. They know how this helps them with new learning.

Leaders of subjects beyond English and mathematics have reviewed their schemes

of work. These follow the national curriculum objectives. They show how pupils' knowledge and skills will build step by step. Some key aims are not developed as much as they could be. For example, in science, pupils gain a secure scientific knowledge. Their science enquiry skills are less secure. Elsewhere, pupils know about different periods of history. They have secure chronology, but are less familiar with the key concepts of parliament and sovereignty. From September 2019, leaders have allocated more time for pupils to complete their studies through extended projects. Leaders want even more pupils to reach the higher standards and gain a deeper understanding in a range of subjects. Leaders are taking the right action to strengthen their schemes of work further. However, not all leaders have had an opportunity to check the new approach to extended study.

The headteacher has planned a detailed staff training programme. Before, training courses reflected staff's interests. This has now changed. Training is now arranged to improve staff subject knowledge and support improvement priorities. Although planned, some elements of the training programme are yet to be completed.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) makes sure that systems are in place to manage and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). She is very knowledgeable about the pupils with SEND and those who are being monitored. Detailed plans are in place to support all pupils with SEND. Targets are precise and reflect pupils' needs and stage of learning. Staff have the required knowledge and skills to support pupils' specific needs. A small minority of parents and carers felt that this aspect of the school's work was not as effective as it could be. Inspection evidence does not support this view.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures. All staff know how to report any concerns they may have. The first agenda item on every staff meeting relates to safeguarding. This makes sure that staff have up-to-date knowledge of local risks.

The headteacher seeks the support and advice of other agencies straight away. Her record keeping is detailed. She is diligent in the timeliness of monitoring incidents.

The safeguarding curriculum is both responsive and proactive. It provides pupils with the skills and knowledge they need to keep themselves safe, particularly when using the internet and social media. Older pupils told us how their teachers had helped them to be confident, so they know how to deal with uncomfortable situations.

Pupils told us that there was no bullying in school. They were also very confident that if it were to happen, teachers would sort it out straight away. Parents endorsed this view.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Schemes of work for subjects beyond English and mathematics detail key knowledge and skills, but do not always make explicit some key concepts. This means that some aspects of pupils' study are not as developed as much as they could be. Leaders need to make sure that schemes of work reflect all key subject-specific concepts, and that all leaders check the implementation of their schemes. Transition arrangements have been applied.
- Not all planned training events have been completed. This has led to some variation in the implementation of some aspects of the curriculum. Leaders must make sure that all staff access the planned training programme, to iron out any variability in the implementation of schemes of work.

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're 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	137022
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10111088
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	269
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Richard Frankland
Headteacher	Carly Spence
Website	www.heighingtonceprimary.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed to the school on 1 May 2019. At the same time, the school became part of Durham Diocesan Multi Academy Trust. It was formerly part of Brand H Academy Trust.
- The predecessor school was last inspected in 2007. It was judged to be outstanding.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character was on 7 February 2018, when it was judged outstanding.
- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- There are fewer disadvantaged pupils than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- During the inspection, we had several meetings with the headteacher, chief executive officer of the trust and three members of the academy council, including the chair. We met with the SENCo, and curriculum leaders for mathematics, science, reading, history and art. A telephone conversation was held with the school improvement adviser.
- Throughout the inspection, we looked at how well school leaders provided safeguarding training and updates for staff, and how they create a culture of vigilance. We talked to the designated lead for safeguarding and reviewed the school's documents relating to safeguarding.
- We agreed with the headteacher to carry out a review of reading, mathematics, science, history, and art as part of the inspection. We extended this further to review staff curriculum training records. Together with curriculum leaders, we completed connected inspection activities that included lesson visits and discussions with leaders, staff and pupils, and completed work scrutinies. During our reviews, we had a particular focus on provision for pupils with SEND.
- We reviewed the wider curriculum and pupils' involvement in extra-curricular activities and events. We also looked at how well leaders protect pupils from bullying and manage staff workload and well-being. We reviewed documents and records relating to pupils with SEND, and reviewed medical and welfare arrangements.

Inspection team

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