

Inspection of a good school: Hesleden Primary School

Hesleden, Hartlepool TS27 4PT

Inspection dates:

5 March 2020

Outcome

Hesleden Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a warm, friendly school. Pupils are happy, polite and full of fun. They feel safe and are well looked after. Their good attendance shows they enjoy school. Pupils describe teachers as 'really nice' and 'kind'. Pupils behave well and their attitudes to learning are positive. Sometimes their attention drifts when tasks lack challenge.

Leaders are raising the profile of reading. Classes have inviting reading corners. Adults read stories to pupils frequently. Trips to the local library are motivating pupils to read. However, there is more to do. The approach to reading varies from class to class. Not all pupils practise their reading regularly. Adults' expertise with reading and phonics varies. Over time, not all pupils do as well as they should in reading and phonics.

Curriculum leaders are enthusiastic. They attend training and share relevant information about their subject with staff. Leaders are keen to map out the most important vocabulary, knowledge and content in their subjects. This work is at the early stages of development in most foundation subjects, including history. Assessment and monitoring arrangements are not yet sorted out for each subject. In some subjects, pupils are not building effectively upon their knowledge and understanding.

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

The headteacher has created a positive, welcoming ethos. Adults and pupils know that their opinions and well-being matter. They all enjoy each other's company and feel valued. Pupils behave well. They are not worried by bullying. The development of pupils' mental health and emotional well-being is strong. Fundamental British values are woven through the curriculum. Pupils have a deep understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Their work with Unicef exemplifies this. This is a respectful, happy place to work and learn.

In discussion with the headteacher, we agreed that reading may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection. Leaders will also focus on the foundation subjects and ensure that the curriculum demands enough of pupils.

Leaders know reading is crucial for pupils' future success. They want all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to read well. Reading is an improvement priority on leaders' development plans. Training and work with other schools are strengthening teachers' knowledge. Regular story times and author visits are enticing pupils into books. Leaders understand that further work is needed.

Leaders check pupils' progress in phonics. Phonics teaching happens frequently. However, not all adults have enough expertise in reading and phonics. Some know and understand the phonics programme well, but others do not. In Reception and key stage 1 not all pupils read books that closely match their phonics knowledge. The proportion of pupils passing the phonics check in Year 1 has fallen over time.

Some pupils lack fluency in reading. Staff look for extra time to support pupils who find reading hard. However, pupils do not get enough practise to read books in school. This includes those pupils who are in danger of falling behind.

Staff have not thought about which poems and stories they would like pupils to know inside out. Some pupils find it hard to talk about their favourite authors, poems or books. Fewer pupils in key stage 1 are reaching the expected standard in reading over time.

Leaders ensure that pupils experience all primary subjects. Curriculum leaders want pupils to do well and enjoy their subjects. Leaders attend training and meetings to develop their subject expertise. However, pupils do better in some subjects than others. Most teachers plan and sequence mathematics well. Pupils in key stage 2, are often stretched to think deeply about mathematics. Overall, pupils achieve well in mathematics.

Leaders are starting to pinpoint what they want pupils to be able to do, know and remember in each subject. Some leaders check how well pupils are doing in each class. In foundation subjects such as history, however, the curriculum is not yet well defined. Plans do not spell out clearly which vocabulary, knowledge and content will be taught, or when. Assessment is not yet effective in checking pupils' knowledge and understanding of history. Pupils find it hard to explain the order of important historical events. They are not sure of the links between past events and our lives today.

Staff help children to settle well when they start school. Teachers develop strong, positive links with families. Regular 'Family Fridays' allow staff and parents to spend valuable time together. Nursery and Reception children are happy. They get along well together. Adults are calm and caring. Children's personal, social and emotional development are fostered well.

In each key stage, some staff use assessment well to plan tasks that are challenging. At times, however, some teachers do not expect or demand enough of children and pupils. They practise things they already know and can do. Their attention drifts as they wait for others to catch up. Progress slows for some.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safety and protection of pupils is prioritised by staff. Leaders work closely with other agencies, such as the police, the health service and social services. They ensure that vulnerable families get the help they need in a timely manner.

Leaders make sure that staff get up-to-date, good-quality training. Staff know the signs of abuse and neglect to look out for. They know how and to whom they can report concerns. Adults' knowledge of the potential risks associated with county lines is well-developed.

The headteacher and chair of governors understand the principles of safer recruitment. Leaders check the suitability of staff working with pupils carefully.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The approach to reading differs across classes. Not all adults who teach phonics and early reading are experts. Some follow the pace and demands of the phonics programme closely, but others do not. Some staff send phonics books home for parents to read with their child. Some do not. Not all pupils read books that are well-matched to their phonics' knowledge. Such inconsistencies hamper progress for some children and pupils. Leaders should bring about a consistency of approach to reading. They should ensure that all adults who teach phonics are well trained and understand the phonics programme well. Leaders should develop greater expertise among staff in the teaching of early reading, agree which stories and poems they would like pupils to know well and ensure that pupils' books match their phonics knowledge precisely.
- Adults try to read once a week with children and pupils. Staff say this does not always happen, due to time constraints. Records confirm that reading is practised infrequently. As a result, fluency and confidence are hampered. Leaders should ensure that all children and pupils practise their reading often with staff. They should make sure that any pupil falling behind gets the additional practice and targeted support they need to catch up.
- Leaders are developing their curriculum offer for pupils. They have begun to improve teachers' subject knowledge to enhance the teaching of the curriculum. However, the most important knowledge and content in foundation subjects, such as history, is not well planned and sequenced. Leaders should pinpoint exactly what they want pupils to know, be able to do and remember in each subject and in each year group.
- Several subject leaders are new to post and are still developing their own expertise. Not all curriculum leaders monitor and assess their subjects well. Leaders should make sure that subject leaders are equipped with the knowledge, skills and time that they need in order to manage their curriculum responsibilities effectively.
- At times the curriculum is not sufficiently demanding. Some children and pupils wait while others catch up or practise things they can already know and can do. Teachers

should ensure that they plan tasks that build on prior knowledge and learning. They should make sure that all children and pupils are challenged effectively.

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 or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence 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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 11–12 October 2011.

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 the school and 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	114143
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10133487
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	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Stafford
Headteacher	Dawn Dunn
Website	www.hesleden.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below national averages. There are no pupils over time who have education, health and care plans.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.

Information about this inspection

- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. This involved visiting lessons, listening to pupils' reading, scrutinising pupils' work, examining documents and meeting with teachers, leaders and pupils.
- We met with the headteacher, curriculum and phase leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, a representative from the local authority, pupils and governors, including the chair of the governing body. We looked at pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and breaktimes.

- We examined a range of documentation, including leaders' development plans and self-evaluation. We considered responses and comments from staff, parents and pupils in relation to Ofsted's surveys.
- We talked with pupils, staff and leaders about pupils' safety and protection. I met with the designated leader for safeguarding and checked safeguarding procedures and records and logs of behaviour and bullying. The records linked to recruitment and training were examined and discussed.

Inspection team

Fiona Manuel, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kathryn McDonald

Ofsted Inspector

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