

Inspection of a good school: Mowden Junior School

Conyers Avenue, Darlington, County Durham DL3 9DE

Inspection dates:

30 and 31 March 2022

Outcome

Mowden Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a friendly and caring school. Pupils and teachers are kind to one another. Pupils are taught to celebrate difference. Year 6 pupils are proud of the recent assembly that they delivered on sign language.

Leaders expect everyone to do their best in school. Pupils take pride in their work. They behave well in lessons and around school. At the end of break, pupils line up immaculately. They play sensibly with each other at lunchtime. Pupils are happy and safe in school. On the rare occasion that bullying occurs, staff educate pupils so that they do not make the same mistakes again.

Pupils get lots of opportunities to develop as individuals. The boys' dance troupe enjoyed being on stage at a recent competition. Older pupils are excited that they get to be play leaders at the nearby infant school. House captains relish the responsibility that they have to shape school life.

Reading is a vital part of the school routine. There are books everywhere. Displays encourage everyone to read. In the afternoon, pupils read one-to-one with volunteer readers from the local community. Pupils talk passionately about their favourite authors.

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

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. There is no less ambition for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have set out a well-designed and ambitious curriculum which gives pupils the knowledge and skills that they need to be ready for secondary school.

The curriculum is well sequenced. This enables staff to ensure that pupils' knowledge builds over time. For example, in science, pupils first learn about electrical currents. They then carry out experiments to test whether materials are conductors or insulators. This help pupils to deepen their knowledge of electricity.

Teachers make effective choices of activities to help pupils to learn the curriculum. Teachers and teaching assistants help pupils with SEND to make strong progress. Assessment is used well by teachers. Teachers regularly check what pupils know and remember. Pupils who need extra support are swiftly identified and helped to keep up. Leaders spotted that some Year 6 pupils have gaps in their knowledge because of the disruption caused by COVID-19. Tutors are providing regular support to ensure that pupils have the knowledge that they need for secondary school. Pupils value their tutoring.

Teachers have had training on how memory is developed. They share ideas with each other on what activities they have used to help pupils to remember important knowledge. In reading and mathematics, pupils frequently revisit their prior learning. This helps pupils to remember important knowledge from these subjects. Teachers do not revisit knowledge in some other subjects as often. They are not clear on what knowledge is the most important to check that pupils have remembered over time. This means that pupils forget some important concepts and ideas in subjects such as geography and French.

Reading is a central part of school life. Pupils are passionate about the joy of reading. Pupils who need more reading practice get extra time reading to well-trained adults. Pupils are growing in confidence and catching up quickly. The work to develop a culture where reading is cherished is impressive.

Pupils typically behave well. Very occasionally, some pupils get over-excited in some lessons and shout out. Teachers manage this well when it occurs.

Pupils' wider development is a high priority for leaders. The personal, social and health education curriculum is effective. It gives pupils a moral steer. Pupils learn about important world events. This curriculum broadens their horizons. Leaders carefully monitor who participates in after-school clubs. They ensure that disadvantaged pupils take advantage of these wider opportunities.

The school is well led. Leaders put pupils at the centre of decision-making. Trustees provide effective governance. They have a wide set of skills and provide effective support and challenge to leaders. There is a real team spirit in school. Everyone who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said that they were proud to work at the school. All felt that leaders take workload and well-being into account when making decisions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are vigilant and alert to safeguarding concerns. Effective staff training means that everyone knows the signs that might indicate that a pupil may be at risk and how to report concerns. When pupils need help, leaders ensure that support is put in place in a timely manner. Safeguarding leaders liaise effectively with external agencies when required.

Pupils are taught important knowledge about the risks that they may face. For example, pupils explore fire safety and how to react if someone that they don't know tries to speak to them over the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, teachers do not systematically identify and revisit important knowledge that has been taught previously. As a result, pupils do not consistently remember the key concepts they have been taught in some subjects. Leaders should identify the most important knowledge that they want pupils to remember in all foundation subjects and ensure that the curriculum supports pupils to embed this knowledge in their long-term memory.

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 outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2012.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	138176
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10211403
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	336
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tarryn Lloyd Payne
Headteacher	Peter King
Website	www.mowdenfederation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is one of two schools in the Federation of Mowden Schools Academy Trust. The other school is Mowden Infant School.
- No pupils attend alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and both deputy headteachers.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the board of trustees, including the chair and vice-chair of the board of trustees. The lead inspector also reviewed documentation relating to governance, including minutes from trustee meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about

their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also visited reading support sessions and listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects. Inspectors met with leaders and teachers, reviewed curriculum plans and spoke to pupils about their learning in other subjects.
- An inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator and visited lessons to look at the support given to pupils with SEND.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with the deputy headteacher who has responsibility for safeguarding. An inspector reviewed the single central record, safeguarding policies and safeguarding records. Inspectors also spoke to staff about their safeguarding knowledge.
- An inspector met with the leader responsible for personal development and visited an assembly.
- Inspectors met with pupils, formally and informally, throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including the school development plan.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and staff given through Ofsted's questionnaires. An inspector also spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Graham Findlay, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mary Cook

Her Majesty's Inspector

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