

Inspection of a good school: Ouston Primary School

Arisaig, Ouston, Chester le Street, County Durham DH2 1RQ

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 May 2022

Outcome

Ouston Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is characterised by good behaviour and pupils' endeavour to succeed. Pupils say everyone is kind to one another, knows each other well and tries to get along. Pupils can spot anyone 'feeling down', and help. Older pupils enjoy being 'buddied up' with a child in Reception just as much as the younger children do. If there is any falling out, pupils know teachers expect them to try and sort things out themselves. Pupils and teachers are unable to recall any reports of bullying. Pupils use the 'worry boxes' in classes to raise issues. They appreciate the role of the school counsellor who is there to help them if they are anxious or upset.

Pupils' love for their school shines through. They especially like the extensive grounds. They talk of reading books in the gazebo, having class bags of equipment for break and making bird feeders and puppets in the forest area. Pupils know they are safe. They point to locked gates, adult supervision, fob access to doors, and fire doors and exits. They say everyone works hard in lessons because teachers expect them to do their best. Competition is fierce to win one of the many school awards available. This includes the 'lunchtime award' for good manners or being a good friend.

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

Pupils love to read. Early reading starts in Nursery. Children know letter sounds and recognise simple words. There is much laughter when 'Mickey the monster' eats simple words children can read. In Reception, children learn more-difficult sounds and use them to read words well. This helps them to write and spell with increasing accuracy. All staff who teach phonics are well trained. The new consistent and systematic way phonics is taught is bearing fruit. Fewer pupils are falling behind. If pupils do struggle with reading, staff give them additional help. The books pupils read match the sounds that they know. This helps them become confident and read fluently and with expression.

Class texts are chosen carefully to give pupils access to a breadth of literature. Texts also link to learning in other subjects, especially history. Pupils listen eagerly to a story at the end of the day.

Leaders have designed a well-structured curriculum. In most subjects, such as mathematics and science, the key ideas that thread through learning are clear. Learning is broken down into smaller steps. The essential knowledge pupils need to know and remember is carefully chosen. Learning builds progressively on what pupils know. This includes in Year 1, as teachers have identified the key learning from the early years. Teachers use assessment well in these subjects because the key knowledge is identified. Teachers pick up on any misunderstandings or gaps in learning. This helps them to shape future learning appropriately. Pupils know more and can do more.

In a few subjects, such as art and design and history, curriculum thinking is less clear. The key ideas that link learning are not defined. Assessment lacks precision, as the essential learning pupils need is not identified. The link between the early years and Year 1 is vague.

Pupils work hard in lessons and are not distracted by others. They describe how teachers make learning interesting and never dull. Children in Reception had fun counting to 10 by adding animals getting onto a ship. When adding decimals in Year 5, pupils make sure that their work is as neat as possible. This prevents them from making errors in their calculations.

Teachers help all pupils to succeed. This includes effective support and nurture for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Skilled leadership of this provision enables pupils to learn alongside their peers with confidence. Learning activities are well matched to pupils' needs. Leaders' commitment to inclusivity means no-one misses out on anything the school offers. Strong and trusting relationships are built with parents. This is pivotal to the success of pupils with SEND in school.

Pupils' all-round development is supported well. Opportunities are offered to visit local theatres and pupils suggest good causes for the 'Friday fundraiser'. Pupils learn to play a musical instrument, visit art galleries and take part in adventurous outdoor residential trips. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures. They are aware of fundamental British values such as tolerance and democracy.

Strong leadership from the board of trustees and the local governing board ensures that the well-being and mental health of both pupils and staff are supported. Teachers speak highly of the ways leaders respond to issues raised on workload through staff questionnaires. Leaders work to remove any unnecessary activities and try to ensure staff have a sensible work-life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, governors and trustees are all committed to making sure safeguarding procedures are watertight. Training for staff is regular and covers emerging local and national issues. Staff spot when something is out of the ordinary because they know pupils well. They report even the slightest worry or concern to leaders. Leaders work well with external partners such as the police community support officers to support pupils. Pupils talk about how they learn to stay safe. They know local areas to avoid and how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects the structure of the curriculum is not helping pupils to know and do more over time. Curriculum thinking in these subjects is unclear. Learning is not well planned and sequenced. Pupils struggle to make connections between new learning and what they already know. Leaders need to make sure that there is a curriculum structure in all subjects that helps pupils to build knowledge progressively. It is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- In some foundation subjects the link to what children learn in the early years is unclear. The essential knowledge pupils must remember to access the curriculum in Year 1 is not specified. Pupils are unable to build on what they already know. Leaders must make clear the key knowledge in all areas of learning that pupils must remember from the early years to help them make a fast start in key stage 1 subjects.
- Systems to assess pupils' learning in some foundation subjects lack precision. Teachers are unable to shape future learning or address gaps in knowledge because what pupils know and remember is unclear. Leaders should ensure that assessment systems in every subject accurately identify what pupils know, can do and remember.

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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Ouston Primary School, to be good in September 2017.

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	144658
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10227631
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	260
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Hilary Akien
Headteacher	Louise Lavelle
Website	www.oustonprimary.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school became part of the Jigsaw Learning Trust in February 2018.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, teachers, and the school business manager. The inspector met three members of the local governing body, including the chair. He also met three members of the trustee board, including the chair.
- Deep dives were carried out in reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector met with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons where available, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to a range of pupils read from different year groups.

- The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other curriculum subjects.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits and at break time. He spoke to pupils about their views of behaviour and a group of pupils gave the inspector a tour of the school.
- The inspector looked at the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks and spoke to trustees, governors, leaders, teachers and pupils about safeguarding.
- The views of 39 parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, were considered. This included the 34 written comments.
- The inspector met with staff to discuss their well-being and workload. He considered the 15 responses from Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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