

Inspection of a good school: Cockton Hill Junior School

McIntyre Terrace, Cockton Hill, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 6HW

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 May 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a warm and welcoming school. Pupils, parents and carers know that there is an adult to help them when they need it. Strong, trusting relationships between pupils and adults mean that pupils feel safe. Staff want pupils to enjoy school and learning. Challenges such as 'magic maths' motivate pupils.

Behaviour is good in lessons. Pupils work hard and respond well to teachers' high expectations. In the playground, pupils are active and cooperative. There are a wide of range of activities to keep them well occupied. Leaders deal effectively with occasional instances of bullying.

Pupils promote school values well, such as the need for respect and equality. Groups such as Pride Patrol lead assemblies to help combat discrimination.

Too many younger pupils do not read with fluency or confidence. Some older pupils struggle to read well and have limited interest in reading. The curriculum is not set out clearly enough. Staff teaching of reading is inconsistent. In other subjects, leaders have begun to identify the most important knowledge to help pupils learn deeply. This work is still under way. Pupils therefore struggle to make links to what they remember in order to learn new knowledge.

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

Leaders have begun to change the way pupils learn to read so they can become successful more quickly. However, weaknesses remain because new systems are not implemented consistently well. Pupils learn new words at different rates. The books pupils read are not well enough matched to their phonics knowledge. They struggle to read some texts.

Leaders have recently made changes to how older pupils are taught to improve their reading fluency and understanding. However, this is also at an early stage. Some older pupils do not enjoy reading. They have limited knowledge of authors and the types of text they are reading.

In mathematics, pupils become confident and solve more complex mathematical problems. Pupils learn mathematical knowledge in small steps. The steps build up in an order. Teachers adapt lessons to make sure that pupils understand the content. Leaders give timely help and guidance to build teachers' expertise.

The curriculum in other subjects, such as geography, is not as well developed. Pupils usually learn knowledge in the right order. However, it is not always the most essential or relevant knowledge. Therefore, pupils remember pieces of information but struggle to understand how knowledge links together. They cannot make sense of the subject as a whole. Subject leaders have begun to adapt the curriculum but it is still a work in progress.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. Staff help pupils overcome any barriers that they have to learning. Staff have a range of expertise. Leaders use guidance from external agencies well when needed. In class, adults provide close support and encouragement. They break down learning into even smaller steps where it is necessary.

Pupils enjoy lessons. Teachers ask probing questions. They check pupils' understanding and deepen their knowledge, especially in mathematics. Teachers' explanations are clear. They use the right resources to help pupils understand new learning, for example using resources such as a large illustration of a ruler showing the relationship between centimetres and millimetres.

The curriculum successfully supports pupils' wider development. It is based on a deep understanding of the local community. Pupils demonstrate school values in their behaviour. They have a mature understanding of different forms of discrimination and the importance of pupils' rights. They are active participants in promoting the curriculum. 'E-cadets' remind pupils of the need for safety when using the internet. Now local restrictions have ended, the careers programme is being reintroduced. Pupils are starting to go on visits again to enrich the curriculum.

Leaders want to improve the school. They know what actions to take and are fully supported by staff. Governors are key partners in this. They know the school well and ask challenging questions when necessary. Staff are positive about the support that they receive from leaders.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that reading and some foundation subjects may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding pupils has the highest priority. The extremely experienced safeguarding team ensures that adults are vigilant and identify any concern. Prompt action is taken to support pupils and their families when it is needed. The safeguarding team is persistent in ensuring that pupils get the right help. Leaders provide staff with regular training and updates. Staff are confident about what to do. Record-keeping and procedures are thorough.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. The curriculum for this is well planned. Pupils know about fake identities when using the internet. They learn about respecting their own and others' bodies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The phonics programme is not sufficiently structured and it is implemented inconsistently. Expectations about what pupils should learn and the rate that they should learn it are not clear. There is no common approach to aspects such as how to teach irregular words or how to listen to individual readers. Reading books do not match well enough to pupils' phonics knowledge. Not all staff have the same level of expertise to teach phonics well. Too many younger pupils and some older pupils lack fluency and confidence in reading. Leaders should implement the planned new phonics programme as swiftly as possible. They should ensure that all staff receive training to implement the programme consistently. Leaders should ensure that there is a common and consistent approach to hearing individual pupils read. Reading books should match pupils' knowledge precisely so they learn to read with fluency and confidence.
- Pupils do not listen to high-quality stories regularly. Leaders are not clear on the range of books and authors that pupils should experience. Pupils who struggle to read do not enjoy reading and have limited knowledge of books and authors. They are not exposed to a wide range of vocabulary. Leaders should ensure that all pupils regularly listen to high-quality stories and literature. Leaders should set out the important books and texts that pupils read or have read to them.
- In some foundation subjects, such as geography, leaders have not specified the most important knowledge pupils should learn. Some of the content is not relevant enough. Pupils struggle to make sense of the subject and to make links between what they have studied. Leaders should review the curriculum to identify the most important substantive and disciplinary knowledge pupils should learn.

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 school to be good in April 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	114110
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10227992
Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Malcolm Cresswell
Acting Headteacher	Anna Caine
Website	www.cocktonhill-jun.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 and 27 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was on maternity leave and an acting headteacher had been in post for the academic year.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

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 leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the acting headteacher throughout the inspection.
- The inspector met with staff, pupils, governors and a representative from Durham local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult.

- The inspector also discussed curriculum plans and spoke to staff about pupils' personal development.
- The inspector reviewed safeguarding records, including the single central record. She talked to pupils and staff about their views of safeguarding.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits, playtime and lunchtime. She spoke to pupils and to staff about their views on behaviour.
- The inspector examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and school development plans and policies.
- The inspector considered 58 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including free-text responses. The inspector also considered 167 responses from the pupil survey and 19 responses from the staff survey.

Inspection team

Susan Waugh, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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