

Inspection of a good school: Escomb Primary School

Three Lane Ends, Escomb, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 7SR

Inspection dates:

17 and 18 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?

Pupils at Escomb Primary are happy and safe. They like coming to school. Pupils say that they are excited by the wide range of experiences on offer. Pupils enjoy a rich and varied curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Pupils are very respectful of one another. They are kind, caring and polite.

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and supportive. Parents and carers recognise how well supported their children are. They told the inspector: 'The school always has the children's needs at heart.'

Bullying does not happen at Escomb Primary School. Where disagreements or difficulties arise, pupils have been taught to apologise and start again. All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The 'star on a bar' reward system encourages pupils to work hard and try their best. Pupils' behaviour is a real strength of the school.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading. However, the books that pupils read are not always accurately matched to the sounds they know. This does not help pupils to develop their fluency. Leaders have reviewed the mathematics curriculum and are clear about what they expect. However, the curriculum is not implemented effectively across all year groups. As a result, work is not sufficiently well matched to what pupils know and can do.

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

Leaders have focused on helping pupils to catch up on lost learning, as a result of COVID-19. Ongoing pupil and staff absences have affected the progress pupils have made since the last inspection. Leaders have listened and worked with staff to make some

changes to improve workload. This has had a positive impact on staff well-being. Leaders and staff work effectively together and staff feel supported as a result.

In subjects such as reading, mathematics and science, the knowledge and skills leaders want pupils to learn have been carefully planned and sequenced. However, COVID-19 has slowed the implementation of these plans. All staff have had the training they need to teach phonics well. Pupils enjoy reading a wide variety of books. Adults listen to younger pupils read regularly. However, teachers do not always address pupils' misunderstandings when they are teaching. This means that opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of vocabulary are also missed. Teachers' use of assessment is not sharp enough. The books that pupils read are not consistently matched to the sounds that pupils have been taught.

In the early years, relationships between adults and children are caring and positive. Children enjoy learning together. They share ideas and encourage each other to try new things. Children enjoy practising their early reading skills with adults when they are working indoors. However, adults have not provided the same opportunities for children to practise their reading and mathematical skills when they are learning outdoors. Opportunities to learn purposefully outside are limited. Consequently, children who choose to be outside miss out on valuable opportunities to practise their counting, letters and sounds.

The mathematics curriculum is well sequenced. Leaders have carefully considered the order in which pupils will be taught new mathematical concepts. Most pupils enjoy mathematics. They enjoy being challenged. However, the curriculum is not being implemented effectively in all year groups. Not all teachers are checking what pupils know and understand carefully enough. Therefore, some pupils are moved on too quickly. They are not given the chance to practise what they have been taught. As a result, some pupils are less secure in their mathematical knowledge and understanding. The resources that teachers use to help pupils understand mathematical concepts are not always used effectively.

A carefully planned curriculum has been created for most subjects. However, in subjects such as music, COVID-19 has meant that the impact is limited. In music, some pupils confidently understand rhythm, pitch and tempo. They excitedly take part in whole-class lessons using tuned instruments, such as glockenspiels. Not all staff have had the training and support they need to teach these subjects well. Leaders have plans in place to address this.

Leaders have spent time improving the help they give pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND are identified quickly. Leaders work effectively with a range of agencies to support these pupils. Staff and parents speak positively about the changes. Pupils with complex SEND have carefully thought-out plans which support them well

Pupils are positive about their time at school. They have a range of experiences across the curriculum to help them to understand diversity. Well-chosen books help pupils to appreciate the many different families and cultures that exist in modern Britain today.

Pupils have a strong understanding of British values, such as democracy. Pupils appreciate the many other opportunities the school has given them, such as linking with and visiting schools abroad.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have carried out the necessary checks to ensure that adults are safe to work with pupils. Records are detailed and kept securely. All staff are suitably trained to keep pupils safe. They know the steps that they need to take if they are worried about a child.

Leaders work effectively with a range of agencies to support pupils and families. As a result, pupils and their families have the support that they need, when they need it.

Leaders teach pupils how to keep themselves safe online. Adults make sure that pupils are taught who they can talk to if they have a problem.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The assessment of phonics is not precise enough. The books that some pupils read are not accurately matched to the sounds that they know well. Consequently, pupils are not practising the sounds that they have been taught. Leaders need to ensure that the books pupils read accurately match the sounds they have learned.
- In mathematics, the checks teachers make on what pupils have learned are not precise enough. As a result, teachers do not always match the work accurately to what pupils need to learn next. Leaders must ensure that assessments in mathematics accurately capture what pupils know so that the work pupils are given is carefully matched to what they need to learn next.
- In the early years, the opportunities for children to develop their early reading, writing and mathematics skills in the outside classroom are limited. As a result, children do not practise their reading and mathematical skills enough. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum and outdoor classroom enable more opportunities for all children to develop these vital early skills.

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 March 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	114103
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10211402
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mrs Jennifer Tremewan
Headteacher	Mrs Wendy Gill
Website	www.escomb.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a number of links with schools internationally.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection 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.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, teachers and the school administrator. The inspector also met six members of the local governing body and met with a representative from the local authority.
- Deep dives were carried out in reading, mathematics, science and music. For each deep dive, the inspector met with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke to pupils about their learning 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 around school. She also spoke to pupils about their views on behaviour.
- The inspector looked at the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, and spoke to leaders, teachers and pupils about safeguarding.
- The views of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. This included all written comments.
- The inspector met with staff to discuss their well-being and workload. The inspector considered the responses from Ofsted's staff survey and the responses from Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Kate Byrne, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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