

Inspection of a good school: Mowden Infant School

Bushel Hill Drive, Darlington, County Durham DL3 9QG

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Outcome

Mowden Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Mowden Infant School enjoy school life and their learning. Pupils have positive behaviour in their lessons and towards each other. Their attitudes to school, supported by a caring staff team, bring to life the school ethos of 'Learning in Partnership'.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils. These expectations reflect both the curriculum and the behaviour and attitudes of pupils in school. The curriculum on offer is broad. Pupils talk excitedly about the range of learning that they do at school.

Around school pupils show high levels of motivation in the activities and learning they take part in. They talk about the good behaviour they see. Pupils are clear they feel safe and have trusted adults to help them with worries. Pupils know what bullying is. Pupils say bullying does not happen very often but if it did it would be sorted out by adults in school. Pupils are passionate about equality and believe that each person is unique and they should be valued the same.

The majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent said, 'This is a wonderful school with caring staff.'

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

Leaders have reviewed and planned an ambitious curriculum for all pupils at Mowden Infant School, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Reading is a priority for leaders. The recently implemented phonics programme is supporting pupils to make good progress in their reading. This can be clearly seen in the rapid start pupils in early years have made to their reading journey. Most pupils have reading books that are well matched to their phonics knowledge. Leaders have invested in a new reading scheme. Pupils talk with excitement about the different characters in the new books they have. Daily story time engages pupils in different types of stories. Some books are very well chosen. They link to topics and themes in the wider curriculum.

Leaders are focused on developing the reading culture in school further. There are plans for the redevelopment of the library.

The curriculum for mathematics is well planned and sequenced. Leaders have thought in detail about how to build and embed new learning in this subject. In early years, pupils make an impressive start to understanding number. Planning makes sure that problem-solving is in place for the youngest pupils. This continues as pupils move through the school. Teachers are supported by knowledgeable leaders of mathematics. Pupils benefit from clear and consistent approaches to the subject. When talking about mathematics, pupils are very proud of their work. They love problem-solving activities.

Pupils in early years have a clearly sequenced curriculum that prepares them for Year 1. Leaders and subject leaders have picked out the important knowledge and skills pupils need to be successful here. In the wider curriculum subjects, such as history, leaders and subject leaders have identified the learning they want pupils to know and remember. With this, opportunities to assess what pupils can remember have also been planned. Occasionally, the learning activities planned do not always match the intentions of the curriculum.

Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning in a variety of lessons. Pupils in the early years are eager to share their work and their learning. Older pupils talk about their own achievements and the rewards they get in school. Older pupils are clear about the consequences for poor behaviour too.

Provision for pupils with SEND is carefully considered. Pupils have support that closely matches their needs. Where needed there are bespoke academic and pastoral plans in place. Referrals to specialist professionals support pupils well.

A well-sequenced curriculum for personal, social and health education helps pupils understand themselves and the world around them. A planned assembly programme works alongside this teaching well. Pupils are clear that people cannot be left out because of their race, religion or gender. Some pupils have a sound and age-appropriate understanding of British values. Trips and visitors are planned to match the curriculum aims as well as broaden the experience of pupils in school. Pupils enjoy going to after-school clubs like 'fit and fruity'.

School staff value the support they have from leaders. Leaders and governors consider the workload of the staff team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and their team are vigilant. There is a culture that safeguarding is of the highest priority. Training for staff and governors is regular and relevant. The DSL and staff know about local issues which might impact their school community. There are clear procedures in place for safeguarding. Record-keeping is

detailed and actions taken are clear. The recruitment of adults follows safer recruitment guidelines.

Pupils are very clear that they feel safe in school. Pupils learn about how to keep safe in the community and online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some wider curriculum subjects, teaching is not as tightly focused on the learning intentions of the lesson and the curriculum as it is in other subjects. As a result, pupils are not building sufficient subject and disciplinary knowledge as effectively as they could over time. Leaders must further refine the curriculum in these subjects to ensure that teachers are clear about what pupils need to know and remember in order to help plan teaching more 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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded 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.

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	138175
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10240618
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tarryn Lloyd Payne
Headteacher	Peter King
Website	www.mowdenfederation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 July 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 Junior School.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. The inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers. They spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at the curriculum in computing. The inspector listened to pupils at the early stages of reading with a familiar adult.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector spoke to staff, parents and governors. Safeguarding documentation was scrutinised, including the safeguarding policies and the single central record. The inspector spoke to pupils and observed relationships

between pupils and adults. The inspector also met with the designated safeguarding lead and a deputy safeguarding lead.

- The inspectors gathered views of parents informally in person and formally through responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. The views of staff were considered through the staff survey and through meetings with them. Pupils' views were considered through meetings.
- The inspector spoke with representatives from the board of trustees.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classes and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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