

Inspection of a good school: West Denton Primary School

Hillhead Road, West Denton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE5 1DN

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2023

Outcome

West Denton Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils obviously enjoy school, and get on well together. Breaktimes are a buzz of activity: pupils play games with gusto, or sit quietly drawing and colouring. Behaviour is good. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and trusting. Pupils say adults are always visible and accessible. This lies at the root of pupils saying they feel safe.

There are no reports of bullying and pupils trust teachers to deal with any misbehaviour swiftly and fairly. Occasional 'falling out' does happen between pupils, but is quickly resolved by pupils themselves or by adults. Pupils try to make sure their class has the best attendance. Rewards like an extra break or a free-choice afternoon are prized.

Pupils enjoy lessons, saying learning is not too easy or hard. They say teachers always expect them to do their best. Pupils gain house points for displaying school values like being caring or a risk-taker. Pupils' eyes light up when talking about the school grounds. Whether it is the cycle track, the edible garden, the orchard or the fitness equipment, all inspire the pupils. The firm favourite is the bushcraft area, with its treehouse, fire pit, pond, tunnels, dens and escape space. This area is a magical place in which to learn.

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

Following the pandemic, many pupils returned to school with significant gaps in their learning. This was despite leaders' efforts to ensure that pupils received education when not at school. Leaders and staff have adapted the curriculum, including for reading and phonics, to ensure that they identify and address these gaps. The impact of this can be seen in what pupils can now remember and in the quality of their current work.

Leaders have devised a curriculum which is inspiring, captivating pupils' interests. In some subjects, such as mathematics and art and design, key themes link learning. Pupils make connections to things they already know. New knowledge builds progressively. Teachers plan lessons so that learning builds sequentially. Links between subjects are made when appropriate, such as the water cycle in geography with evaporation in science. The

curriculum is brought to life by using local resources, including the local river for environmental science. Teachers use assessments and daily checks to clarify what pupils have grasped. Extra help is given to pupils so that everyone keeps up. A few subjects, such as history, need further work so that the key ideas that link learning are clear and knowledge builds on what pupils know.

Leaders make sure that all pupils learn to read as quickly as possible. Teachers use the same structure, phrases and routines in daily phonics lessons. Many children in Nursery already know and recognise the sounds of some letters. Most children in Reception have the skill to blend sounds to read simple words. Pupils practise reading with books that match their phonics knowledge, and so develop confidence and self-belief. Older pupils talk about favourite authors and types of books. Books from the library are changed every two weeks. Pupils are quickly building the knowledge and skills they need to read well.

Pupils' attitudes to learning and in lessons are positive. In Nursery, children eagerly matched numerals to golden eggs and put them onto a tens frame. Children in Reception were keen to have a go at ordering numbers to 10. Older pupils listen, concentrate and help their classmates to succeed. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn well. Leaders have actioned effective systems to identify pupils' needs, provide help and move pupils towards being the best they can be. Leaders are determined to see all pupils succeed and provide many additional support tools for pupils with SEND. This reflects the school's inclusivity and enables all pupils to access the full curriculum.

The headteacher and leaders create many opportunities and activities to promote pupils' broader development. These are extensive, exhilarating and purposeful. Pupils experience activities such as cycling and gardening. Bushcraft develops skills like outdoor cooking, making shelters, team building and creative thinking. The Olympics Challenge Project encourages pupils to compete against themselves, setting personal bests. Pupils increase the value of an initial start-up fund with a business idea in the enterprise project. Pupils plant, harvest and cook with the produce from the edible garden.

The headteacher has combined aspects of these many projects into a 'life skills challenge award'. This promotes positive characteristics in pupils such as communication, tolerance, respect and creativity. Pupils raise money for the children's heart unit in the local hospital. Through local charities, they also support areas such as disability and homelessness, and musicians. This whole aspect of the school's work in the 'life skills challenge' is inspiring.

Staff morale is strong. Adults are proud to work in the school. Supportive teamwork, systems to promote staff's well-being, and leaders' understanding of family and work-life balance results in a happy atmosphere. Most staff want to stay a part of it. Leaders treat staff fairly and with respect.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure safeguarding is a top priority. Everyone is involved. Staff know how to spot even the smallest issue that could be a concern because training for all staff and governors is relevant and up to date. Leaders take swift, appropriate action to help pupils.

Office staff carry out appropriate vetting checks on the suitability of staff. Checks on systems and records are made by the link safeguarding governor. External partners complete detailed safeguarding audits adding extra layers of vigilance. Leaders strive for high attendance by pupils. Pupils learn how to stay safe in and out of school. They learn about online safety and road safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in a few foundation subjects is not as well mapped out as it is in others. Key themes that link learning are not clearly defined. The most important knowledge that pupils need to know and remember is unclear. Leaders must ensure that all curriculum areas are carefully structured, planned and sequenced, so that pupils learn well across all subjects.

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 December 2013.

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	108449
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10269205
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joanne Lockey
Headteacher	Mick MingStones
Website	www.westdenton.newcastle.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Outer West Learning Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this graded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 his evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leaders, and other school staff.
- The inspector met four members of the local governing board, including the chair. He also met the school achievement partner.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, where available, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke to pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to a range of pupils read from different year groups.
- The inspector looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about a range of curriculum subjects.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits and breakfast club, and at breaktime and lunchtime. He spoke to pupils about their views of behaviour. A group of pupils gave the inspector a tour of the school and its grounds.
- The inspector looked at the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. He looked at documents and records relating to safeguarding. The inspector spoke to leaders, teachers, governors and pupils about safeguarding.
- The views of parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View were considered, including all written comments.
- The inspector met with staff to discuss their well-being and workload. He considered the responses and comments from Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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