

# Inspection of a good school: Howletch Lane Primary School

Pennine Drive, County Durham, Peterlee, County Durham SR8 2NQ

---

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 June 2023

## Outcome

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

## What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff have established a supportive ethos. Most pupils feel happy and safe.

Leaders are focused on establishing high expectations for every child. This is beginning to improve the school. However, the curriculum is not implemented consistently well. This means that pupils learn more in some subjects than in others. Although improving, there remains some variability in how well the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are met.

Pupils play well together at lunchtimes and breaktimes. They enjoy taking part in the range of activities available. Pupils mostly behave well in lessons. Where this is not the case, new approaches and support introduced by leaders are beginning to have a positive effect. Bullying is rare. Where it happens, leaders take action to address this. Pupils are confident that staff will help them with any concerns.

The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils' personal development. Pupils are proud of their various leadership roles, such as acting as reading ambassadors. Educational visits to places such as Souter Lighthouse widen pupils' experiences. The school's 'Howletch 100' identifies the varied opportunities pupils will encounter through their educational journey at the school. Parents are positive about increased involvement with the life of the school.

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

Leaders' recent changes to the curriculum are beginning to improve how well knowledge is planned out in subjects.

In mathematics, pupils build their knowledge over time. They have secure understanding

of recent topics such as perimeter and negative numbers. However, some pupils have not established strong enough knowledge of multiplication. This can slow pupils' responses in number work.

Leaders have begun to prioritise the teaching of reading. All staff have completed training in the teaching of phonics and early reading. Pupils read books that are suitably matched to their phonic knowledge. However, there remain some inconsistencies in the teaching of the school's phonics programme. Too many pupils have not gained secure phonic knowledge by the end of Year 1. In key stage 2, some improvements have been made in the teaching of reading. For example, leaders have identified the quality texts that pupils will experience. Opportunities such as reading club are widening pupils' reading experiences. However, a clear approach to teaching reading is not well established.

Leaders are beginning to revise the curriculum in foundation subjects. These subjects need further refinement to build pupils' knowledge effectively. For example, in geography, pupils are developing suitable knowledge of people and places. However, their knowledge of maps does not build systematically and they have limited experience of fieldwork. Sometimes, teachers do not select suitable activities for teaching the curriculum. Where this is the case, lessons do little to build on pupils' prior knowledge. Approaches to checking pupils' learning in foundation subjects are at an early stage of development.

Leaders' have identified that there is more to do to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Suitable plans, including staff training, are in place to improve provision and outcomes for these pupils. There are some early signs that appropriate adaptations for these pupils are beginning to have a positive impact. However, the academic, social and emotional needs of these pupils are not met securely.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is variable. Teachers' expectations and approaches to securing good behaviour are not consistent. Leaders' actions to improve the behaviour of pupils with high levels of social and emotional needs have substantially reduced incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils appreciate the new house points system.

The school's personal, social and health education curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs. Training has increased staff expertise to support pupils' mental health needs. There are a range of clubs, for example, sport, music and cookery, to develop pupils' interests. Activities such as tree planting, visiting the local care home and performing at the Sage Gateshead all develop pupils' sense of community. Pupils are proud of their ambassador roles where they support their peers.

Following a period of considerable changes in leadership and staffing, the school is now in a more settled position. Leaders' actions to address priorities are beginning to show signs of improvement in pupils' academic achievement, social and emotional development and behaviour. Leaders take account of staff workload and well-being. Many subject leaders are new to their roles. Some of these leaders have not yet received training to develop their curriculum expertise or leadership skills to check their subjects.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff promptly identify pupils who are vulnerable to safeguarding risks. Leaders work effectively with agencies and families to secure the help that pupils need. The school has suitable procedures to check the suitability of staff working at the school.

The school's curriculum provides pupils with guidance on how to stay safe. The school works in partnership with leaders from other local schools and the police to mitigate issues of anti-social behaviour within the community. This aims to help keep pupils safe when they are outside of school and help them be more ready to learn when in school.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' achievements in phonics and reading are too low. This reduces how well pupils can access other curriculum areas. Leaders need to ensure the recent improvements to teaching phonics and early reading are applied consistently across the school. They should review how reading is taught across key stage 2 to ensure that a consistent, effective approach is in place.
- The school's curriculum in some foundation subjects is not well sequenced. Pupils do not build their knowledge and skills successfully. Leaders should work with subject leaders, particularly those new to their role, to improve the sequence of the curriculum in foundation subjects and the associated systems for checking on pupils' knowledge.
- Sometimes, teachers do not select suitable activities to teach the planned curriculum. Pupils are not gaining the intended knowledge in an effective way. Leaders need to provide staff training to help teachers make suitable choices of worthwhile teaching activities.
- The needs of pupils with SEND have not been clearly identified. Adaptations to support these pupils to access the curriculum successfully are not well devised. Leaders need to implement the school's improvement plans successfully for pupils with SEND.
- Leaders' plans to ensure that pupils behave well in lessons are not consistently applied across the school. Some children and pupils do not display positive enough attitudes to learning in lessons. Leaders need to ensure that expectations and approaches to establishing positive pupil learning attitudes are consistently applied by staff.

## 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2018.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114198
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255878
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	384
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Karen Stevens
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Beattie
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.howletchlane.co.uk">www.howletchlane.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	30 and 31 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- There have been several changes to the school staff since the previous inspection report. The headteacher came into post in January 2023.
- The school has an enhanced learning provision (ELP) for pupils with SEND. The provision caters for 12 pupils between the ages of 4 to 11. The pupils who attend the ELP have a range of primary needs. The most common primary need is autism.
- The school uses no alternative providers.

## 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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher and the leaders for pupils' personal development and behaviour. He met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector met with a representative from the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, he discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector discussed the school's safeguarding procedures with a range of staff. He reviewed the school's documentation regarding safeguarding. He discussed how safe pupils feel in school and how staff teach them to stay safe, including online.
- The inspector analysed the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, staff and parents.

### **Inspection team**

Michael Reeves, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2023