

Inspection of an outstanding school: Sugar Hill Primary School

Sheraton Road, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 5NU

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 October 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is much to celebrate about this school.

The school has created a culture where pupils are polite and well mannered. As a result, pupils hold doors open for each other and adults. They speak nicely, such as by saying 'You're welcome' when they are thanked for something. Time between lessons is calm. Lunchtime is a hive of fun and purposeful activity and play.

Pupils are kind to each other. The school teaches them about the importance of respecting people's individuality. Pupils embrace this. They are happy and safe. Pupils behave well in lessons, but sometimes they do not pay as much attention to learning as they should.

The school is ambitious for pupils. Leaders have worked hard to create a curriculum, which helps pupils learn and broadens their horizons. In some areas, such as English, mathematics and the personal development of pupils, this is effective. However, in other areas, the curriculum is not ensuring pupils develop a rich understanding of the subjects they are taught.

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

The school has put a great deal of thought into their curriculum. They have mapped this carefully from Nursery to Year 6, detailing the important content pupils need to learn. In the early years, children quickly settle into routines and learn well. They make progress towards the curriculum's clearly identified end points. From Year 1 onwards, teachers use the curriculum to make sure pupils learn what they should. They check, at the time they teach the content, that pupils have understood. However, in subjects other than mathematics and English, the school does not use assessment well to check that pupils

remember this important knowledge in the long term. Pupils do not remember key content as well as they should.

Teachers use the school's chosen approach to teaching. Pupils regularly work in groups, for example. Teachers follow the school's curriculum plans carefully. However, pupils can become distracted and sometimes do not follow teachers' guidance well. When this happens, some teachers do not respond promptly enough to ensure that pupils pay attention.

Reading is taught well. The school has committed time to training all staff to teach phonics in line with their chosen programme. Staff consistently teach the programme well. The books pupils read are matched to the sounds they have learned. If pupils are at risk of falling behind, staff step in immediately to make sure that pupils keep up. This ensures all pupils learn to read with increased fluency. The school builds on this with a carefully plotted reading curriculum. This exposes pupils to all styles of writing and inspires them to want to read. Pupils learn to read well.

The school helps pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to learn the same curriculum as their peers. Sometimes, this is achieved because of the way the curriculum is planned and taught. For example, all pupils are helped to learn well in mathematics through well-established daily retrieval activities. Sometimes, this is through additional support, such as different or extra resources. Where pupils really struggle, the school teaches them the same curriculum as it would normally be taught to younger pupils. This helps them to progress to their next stage of learning.

The school's approach to personal development works well. The school has put in place a range of activities to broaden pupils' horizons, such as the chance to work with university students on a production to be performed on the university stage. They arrange for visits and visitors to complement the curriculum. For example, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils' understanding of science is enhanced by a visit to a university technical college.

The detailed personal, social and health curriculum is enhanced by the school's 'global curriculum'. Here, pupils learn subject content and positive values through themed projects. For example, pupils study literature which helps to underpin the school's achievement of the LGBTQ+ Rainbow Flag award. This helps pupils to be well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Leaders and staff work well to make sure that parents are involved in their child's education. The 'reading café', for instance, welcomes parents in to read with their children. Staff feel supported by leaders. They appreciate the consideration given by leaders to their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not insist on pupils following classroom routines consistently well. Pupils sometimes lose focus and do not pay attention. The school should ensure that teachers consistently have high expectations for all pupils in all lessons to support pupils to access the learning opportunities available.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, the school does not check well that pupils have remembered what they have been taught in the long term. Pupils' understanding in these subjects is limited and sometimes confused. The school should check that pupils learn and remember the important concepts they need in all subjects.

Background

When we have judged outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding on 12 and 13 September 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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium](#)

[funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	114207
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10297280
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	449
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Denise Raine
Headteacher	Paula O'Rourke
Website	www.sugarhill.durham.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs before- and after-school clubs for its pupils.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers and other leaders. He met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair, and spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, religious education (RE) and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also visited lessons in reading and mathematics.

There were no RE lessons available for the inspector to visit. The inspector visited lessons in other subjects which share the school's chosen approach to teaching foundation subjects.

- The inspector also spoke with pupils about what they had learned in science, geography and history.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record of recruitment checks; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and spoke to a range of staff to gather their views. He spoke with pupils and reviewed the responses to Ofsted's survey of their views, as well as considering the responses to Ofsted's survey of parents' views, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Andrew Hemmings, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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