

Inspection of Darras Hall Primary School

Middle Drive, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE20 9DS

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Victoria Parr. This school is part of Pele Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kieran McGrane, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gerald James Miller.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Darras Hall Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Darras Hall First School to be outstanding, before it opened as Darras Hall Primary School and subsequently converted to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a welcoming school with a true spirit of community. The school works together with parents and carers to meet pupils' needs. Staff know the pupils well. They show a genuine care for them. Pupils thrive at this school.

The school has the highest of expectations for all pupils. It provides pupils with a first-rate education that is both knowledge rich and culturally diverse. Pupils enjoy their learning. They are eager to contribute to discussion and debate. Pupils produce work of a high quality. They achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils behave in an exemplary fashion. They are polite, friendly and respectful of others. As pupils move on through the school, they take increasing responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils build strong friendships and support each other's well-being. They make a significant contribution to the school's positive and inclusive culture.

The school provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. Pupils take part in clubs and activities including sports, dance, choir and forest school. There are residential trips and trips abroad. Pupils contribute to the development of the school community. There are several pupil councils, including a diversity council. The school listens to pupils. It values their opinions.

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

The school has established a broad and ambitious curriculum that provides pupils with a deep body of knowledge. Subject specific curriculum teams bring a real expertise to curriculum design. The curriculum is well sequenced. It builds pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in a coherent way. Pupils deepen and extend their learning as they move up through the school. They learn to think and work like subject specialists, such as scientists and geographers. In the early years, children gain the phonic and mathematical knowledge they need. They develop a growing resilience and independence. The curriculum in the early years prepares children well for Year 1 and beyond.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) access the same curriculum as their peers. The school identifies their needs well. Teachers and other adults provide pupils with the specific support they need to thrive.

The school prioritises reading. From the start of Reception, pupils learn to read using phonics. Those pupils who need extra help with reading get it straight away. Frequent and timely support helps these pupils to become fluent and confident readers. The school selects high quality class texts with considerable thought and research. Texts reflect themes such as sustainability and diversity. The school promotes a love for reading through other events such as reading week, author visits and reading challenges. Pupils enjoy reading and read often at school.

In the early years, the school has developed a well-resourced and purposeful learning environment. The early years staff adapt the curriculum to meet children's development needs. However, sometimes adults do not develop children's language with enough rigour and precision. Sometimes, they do not ensure that children engage quickly enough in purposeful activity.

Teachers have an appropriate depth of subject knowledge. They understand how best to teach specific subjects. They check pupils' understanding and adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs regularly. Moreover, they choose activities and resources that enable pupils to secure and extend their learning. Pupils, including those with SEND, achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. The school does not tolerate any disruption to learning. Indeed, pupils learn without disruption. They are attentive and focus on their work.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is exceptional. Central to the school's approach is a set of values that underpins school life. Staff teach pupils how to be responsible and resilient and how to show respect to others. Pupils learn about relationships and equality and diversity in an age-appropriate way. The school promotes pupils' physical and mental health. Furthermore, pupils understand what it means to be an active citizen in a diverse and inclusive world. They take part in charity work in support of both the local and global community.

The trust supports the continuous development of the school. The school benefits from the leadership development opportunities the trust provides. Trustees and members of the local governing body perform their duties with appropriate rigour. They provide strategic direction and hold the school to account. The school involves parents in the life of the school in support of pupils' education. Staff receive regular and highly effective professional development. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' educational experience. Staff enjoy working at the school. The school prioritises staff well-being and ensures that staff workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	145781
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10242416
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	446
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gerald James Miller
CEO of the trust	Kieran McGrane
Headteacher	Victoria Parr
Website	www.darrashallprimary.com
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Darras Hall Primary School converted to become an academy in February 2019. When its predecessor school, Darras Hall First School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of Pele Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher, other school leaders and staff, the chair of the board of trustees and members of the local governing body, the chief executive officer of the trust, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, and geography. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors also discussed the curriculum in design and technology and in religious education. They looked at samples of pupils' work in these subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; 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 inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff, and to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Ian Rawstorne, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Ailsa Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Mitchinson	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Beadnall	His Majesty's Inspector

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