

# Inspection of a good school: Oakley Cross Primary School and Nursery

Lomond Walk, West Auckland, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 9UD

---

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 November 2023

## **Outcome**

Oakley Cross Primary School and Nursery continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Oakley Cross is a welcoming, inclusive school. New pupils who arrive appreciate how easy it is to make new friends and to fit in. Staff are sensitive and caring. They help the youngest children settle quickly.

Pupils feel safe. They have warm, secure relationships with staff who they trust to help and support them at all times. Pupils respond well to high expectations. Pupils work diligently during lessons and move around school in an orderly way. Poor behaviour is rare and dealt with promptly. Bullying and the use of discriminatory language occur very infrequently. When incidents happen, adults resolve them, and they do not recur.

Pupils are encouraged to be independent from a very early age. Adults guide two-year-old children to serve themselves at snack time. All older pupils take a leadership role or a responsibility. This includes helping younger pupils with their reading and mathematical skills.

The local area is used as a rich resource to stimulate pupils' enjoyment of the curriculum. Geographical fieldwork takes place at the local river. Visits to a nearby Roman Fort enhances pupils' historical knowledge. Pupils experience powerful emotions when studying paintings at an art gallery.

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

The school prioritises reading. The library is at the heart of the school so that pupils visit it regularly to select books that interest them. The curriculum is well organised to help pupils read a broad range of texts and authors.

The phonics programme is carefully sequenced and taught well by staff. They check pupils' knowledge to make sure those who need extra support receive it. As a result, pupils become fluent readers. Pupils blend sounds together with increasing speed. Older pupils who are not so fluent get more support to help them catch up.

Younger children settle quickly into the early years. Staff are warm and caring. They give children the confidence to be independent and have a go. The curriculum supports children's language and reading skills effectively. Staff help children learn a wide vocabulary and more complex language. Staff teach children in Reception class the sounds they need to help them read.

Pupils enjoy learning mathematics. They build their knowledge gradually in small steps. Staff provide the right resources and guidance to help pupils build their knowledge. Teachers ask pupils probing questions to check their knowledge. They tackle misunderstandings straightaway. As a result, pupils develop the skills to grapple with mathematics that is more difficult.

The curriculum is ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff know pupils well. Staff provide the right help and resources so pupils can join in lessons. Pupils who need very close support are helped to do things for themselves. Skilled and enthusiastic staff give tailored help to pupils who need it.

In many foundation subjects, pupils' knowledge and skills continually build sequentially and effectively on what pupils already know and can do. Pupils regularly revisit knowledge taught previously. There are clear goals for what pupils should know and remember. However, this is not consistently the case in all subjects. In geography and history, for example, pupils do not have a good grasp of the links and themes between the different topics they study. Pupils are not able to use subject-specific terminology confidently. There are gaps in pupils' map-reading skills. Some pupils struggle to use the maps they are given to read. This hampers their progress.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities to enhance their personal development. Memorable visits give pupils a strong sense of their own heritage. Visits develop their cultural understanding. Pupils learn about the world beyond their own local area and gain values of tolerance and respect. Achievements, whether from school or home, are celebrated.

The school knows that some pupils are absent for lengthy periods. Appropriate steps are in place to reduce this. Staff are tenacious and continue to work with families to deal with the reasons for absence.

Strong teamwork is characteristic of staff in school. They want to do the very best for all pupils. They feel well supported by leaders. The governing body is proud that the school is so welcoming. Governors have sharpened their monitoring and checks since the last inspection. They provide the right level of support and challenge to help the journey of improvement.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- In some foundation subjects, such as geography and history, pupils' knowledge of the links and themes between the topics they study is insecure. Pupils lack confidence in using subject-specific terminology. The school needs to clearly identify the links and themes in subjects and the key terminology they intend pupils to learn. It needs to ensure this is used to plan and provide logically sequenced learning which enables pupils' knowledge and skills to build consistently and effectively on what they already know and can do in all subjects.
- Gaps in pupils' map-reading skills hamper their ability to use the resources they are given. As a result, pupils find the activities given are, sometimes, too difficult. The school must ensure pupils develop the map-reading skills needed so that pupils can be successful in the activities they undertake.

## 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 May 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' 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114069
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10290019
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	171
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs D Farrer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs S Atkinson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.oakleycross.durham.sch.uk">www.oakleycross.durham.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	1 and 2 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school operates a breakfast club.

## 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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of the governing body, the attendance officer and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 inspector reviewed the curriculum in some other subjects as well as the curriculum for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector reviewed school documentation, spoke to staff with different responsibilities and held discussions with pupils about aspects of school life.
- The inspector considered the responses and the free-text comments on Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. She also considered responses from the online staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Susan Waugh, 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