

Inspection of a good school: Silver Tree Primary School and Nursery

Durham Road, Ushaw Moor, Durham Road, Ushaw Moor, Durham, Durham DH7 7LF

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 December 2023

Outcome

Silver Tree Primary School and Nursery continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy in school. They say that they feel safe because their friends and their trusted adult are always around. Pupils know how to stay safe out of school, especially online. Pupils know how to recognise and manage their feelings. Breaktimes are lively and energetic. Older pupils play games sensibly. Younger pupils enjoy a chat and most love talking to adults. Pupils know adults will intervene quickly in any incidents. Most pupils resolve occasional fallouts themselves.

Family groups play a significant part in school life. The six groups, represented by different birds like the bullfinch, green woodpecker or kingfisher, meet every two weeks. Pupils of all ages, including siblings, discuss their lessons or important issues like recycling during family time. Children in early years enjoy learning and playing alongside each other. Reception children love having Nursery children nearby.

Pupils are expected to listen carefully, keep desks tidy, show good manners, be kind and work hard. Most pupils do this without being asked, saying they would do these things anyway. Most pupils achieve well as a result of the school's high expectations, saying how much they enjoy lessons. Reading sits at the heart of the school. The revamped library is well stocked, and, like the rest of the school, inviting and uncluttered.

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

In most subjects, the way the curriculum is designed and structured is well thought through. The school has identified the key learning pupils need at the end of each unit of work. Lessons are sequenced to make sure pupils build on what they already know. The school focuses on pupils being able to investigate, use and apply knowledge in subjects like mathematics and science. Big ideas that connect learning are embedded and understood by pupils. This helps pupils remember new knowledge in the long term.

There are a few subjects that are not as well mapped out. The key ideas connecting learning and the essential knowledge that must be remembered lack a sharp focus. Remembering new knowledge is then more difficult for some pupils.

The school uses assessment effectively. Daily checks in lessons alert the school to some pupils who need extra help to keep up with their classmates. Lessons are planned to make sure that there are no gaps in pupils' learning. Formal assessments, over time, check that pupils have moved learning to their long-term memory.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are mainly spotted in early years. Working with parents, plans are devised for the school to meet the needs of all pupils. Skilled staff support the needs of individual pupils. No pupil with SEND misses out on any part of school life or the curriculum. Adaptations are made to lessons, such as lists of key vocabulary, wobble cushions or fiddle toys, to make sure pupils learn with their classmates whenever possible.

Pupils are quickly becoming skilled readers. Daily phonics lessons follow the same routines and use the same mantras. Children in Reception learn two new sounds each week and practise them on a Friday. Younger pupils show top effort and application in phonics lessons. They are fully motivated to learn, which helps them to learn quickly. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 take books home to practise their reading to help them develop confidence and become fluent readers. Books match pupils' ability and are not too difficult. The school is developing an ethos where reading is a top priority and a pleasure. The school is not resting on its laurels and is pushing to improve reading even further.

The school prioritises pupils' wider development so that they are ready for the next stage of education. Clubs on offer change regularly and include robotics, choir and sports. Celebration assemblies reward good attendance, resilience and aspiration. Pupils access local projects promoting key issues like climate change. Visits to science departments in local universities, a farm, an aquarium, a quarry, and a local cathedral expand pupils' knowledge and appreciation of their culture, heritage and beauty of the locality. Pupils use the onsite outdoor classroom and large forest as part of learning. Dance and sports festivals are regular events.

The school supports staff well-being very effectively. Relationships are warm, staff feel valued and consulted, and regular face-to-face communication is the norm. Staff new to teaching are supported well. School staff talk of a team approach based on mutual support and an ethos of positivity. Governance is highly effective, providing objective oversight and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few foundation subjects are not as well structured as they need to be. In these subjects, the main ideas that link knowledge, and the most important learning that pupils need to know and remember, are vague. This includes being unclear for pupils. This is limiting pupils' capacity to remember more over time and make links to previous learning. The school needs to make sure that all subjects are equally well mapped out so that pupils can learn equally well and retain more knowledge across the whole curriculum.

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 the school to be good in June 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 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	123350
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10290116
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	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Pam Monaghan
Headteacher	Helen Grainger
Website	www.silvertreeprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The headteacher took up her post on 1 September 2023.
- The school hosts one of four Durham Local Authority Nurture Hub Project Bases with provision for up to 12 pupils for three sessions per week each.

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, senior leaders and other school leaders. The inspector also met with teachers and a range of other staff.
- The inspector met four members of the local governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. He also spoke to the local authority school development partner.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils and teachers, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector looked at curriculum documents and spoke to leaders about a range of other curriculum subjects.
- The inspector listened to a range of pupils, from different year groups, read.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits, at breaktime and at lunchtime. He spoke to pupils about their views of behaviour. A group of pupils gave the inspector a tour of the school.
- 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 considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. He also considered the views of pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector considered the well-being and workload of staff. He took note of the responses and comments from Ofsted's staff survey, including comments made by staff about their well-being.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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