

# Inspection of an outstanding school: West Cornforth Primary School

High Street, West Cornforth, Ferryhill, County Durham DL17 9HP

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Inspection dates:

7 and 8 February 2024

## **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?**

Pupils at the school are happy, friendly and confident. They talk proudly about how they show the school's new values. These include respect and kindness. Pupils feel safe in school. They know that they can talk to adults or use the 'worry monsters' if they have any concerns. Pastoral support for pupils and their families is strong. The school has excellent links with external agencies. It uses these links effectively to help pupils and their families with any challenges they face, such as issues with attendance.

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum. Staff know that their expectations of pupils need to be high. Pupils' work shows that they are achieving well. They take pride in what they produce. The atmosphere in lessons is calm and purposeful. However, there is some challenging behaviour in the school. Pupils say that this is not dealt with consistently by staff. Leaders have introduced a new behaviour policy to address this. The school deals with any incidents of bullying swiftly and appropriately.

The school has worked to build positive relationships with parents and carers. Staff organise events for parents and pupils to attend together, such as the 'books at bedtime' event. Some events give pupils opportunities to develop their confidence and self-esteem. For example, pupils are taking part in a school talent show.

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

Since the beginning of this academic year, the school has prioritised the teaching of phonics. All staff are trained in how to teach the school's phonics programme. They teach it consistently well. The school identifies pupils who are struggling with phonics quickly. These pupils get the support that they need to catch up with their peers. The school prepares children in Nursery well for more formal phonics teaching in Reception. For example, they learn rhymes and how to listen for different sounds. Once children start

Reception, they begin to learn phonics straight away. The school has invested heavily in phonics reading books. This means that pupils read books that are well matched to their phonics knowledge. Most pupils quickly become confident readers. The school is now working to develop the wider reading culture from the early years to Year 6. For example, it has recently appointed pupil reading ambassadors.

The school's curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced. The school considers how the curriculum in the early years lays the foundations for children's future learning. For example, children in Reception used old photographs to make comparisons between what the local area looks like now and how it used to look. This helps to prepare them for studying history once they move into key stage 1. Similarly, children have opportunities to develop their understanding of number, shape and space. This means they are ready for more complex work in mathematics in Year 1.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well cared for. The school carefully considers how these pupils will access both the curriculum and the wider curriculum offer, such as educational visits and after-school clubs. Parents are heavily involved in writing and reviewing support plans for their children with SEND. The coffee mornings for parents of pupils with SEND are well attended. These give parents opportunities to engage with a range of professionals, such as family support workers and staff from the autism and social communication team.

Systems are in place to check what pupils know and remember. In some subjects, such as mathematics, teachers use assessment effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. They plan tasks or sequences of lessons to address these gaps. However, this is not the case in all subjects. In some subjects, such as history, the approach to assessment is not as rigorous. This means that some gaps in pupils' knowledge may not be addressed.

The school has robust procedures in place to improve pupils' attendance. There are some instances where these procedures are having a positive impact. However, there is a significant minority of pupils who do not attend school regularly enough. This means they miss out on important learning, fall behind their peers and do not achieve their full potential.

Pupils enjoy sharing the range of opportunities the school gives them to broaden their development. They talk enthusiastically about events such as the Pride march and visits to the local war memorial to lay crosses for remembrance. Pupils learn about diversity and equality through themes such as Black History Month. There is a range of leadership roles for pupils, including being a school councillor, well-being monitor or an e-cadet. Pupils appreciate the extra-curricular clubs that they can attend. These include a cookery club, craft club and ball skills club.

The school has been through a period of change since the new headteacher started in September 2023. Despite this, there is a strong sense of teamwork among the staff. They are proud to work at the school. They appreciate leaders' consideration of their workload and well-being. Governors are committed to the school. They understand their role and support and challenge leaders.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Assessment is not used consistently well across all subjects. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge are not identified and addressed as a matter of course. The school should continue to refine its approach to assessment to ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge are not missed.
- A significant minority of pupils do not attend school regularly enough. These pupils miss important learning and do not achieve their full potential. The school should continue to work with parents to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be 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 in November 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>	114079
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322969
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	219
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Dennis Ramsey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kathryn Costello
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.westcornforth.durham.sch.uk">www.westcornforth.durham.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date(s) of previous inspection</b>	6 and 7 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in September 2023. There have been other recent changes in leadership alongside this. Some staff are temporarily leading subjects until newly appointed staff start at the school.
- The school has a nursery which children can attend from the age of two.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school offers childcare at the start and end of each day. This is managed by the governing body.

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

- The inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. The inspector also met with the chair and other members of the governing body as well as a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. 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.
- Pupils were observed reading to familiar adults.
- The curriculum offer for pupils' wider development was considered.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school was observed.
- 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 responses made by parents to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments were considered as part of the inspection. The inspector also considered the responses to the staff questionnaire.

## **Inspection team**

Philippa Kermotschuk, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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