

Inspection of a good school: Hamsterley Primary School

Hamsterley Primary School, Hamsterley, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL13 3QF

Inspection date:

13 February 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good 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 are proud to attend Hamsterley Primary School. The small size of the school fosters a palpable 'family' atmosphere. Pupils enjoy celebrating each other's achievements. They thrive in this caring environment. The relationships between staff and pupils are delightful. The mixed-age classes contribute to the encouraging friendships across year groups. Pupils love the forest school in the grounds.

The curriculum in the past has not equipped pupils with the knowledge needed to achieve well. Across most subjects, leaders have now introduced carefully designed new curriculums that are more ambitious for all pupils. Pupils are excited by their lessons. While pupils have a strong grasp of new learning, gaps in their prior knowledge continue to hinder their progress. In some subjects, new curriculums are not yet fully embedded. Teachers are sometimes unclear about what knowledge and skills pupils are intended to learn or how well they are doing. This continues to hamper pupils' achievement.

The school ensures that pupils are provided with the right knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe. Pupils know their rights and treat others with respect. This contributes towards excellent behaviour throughout school. Pupils are motivated by the reward systems in school. Bullying is not an issue.

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

There have been widespread changes across the school since it joined the federation. Leaders have prioritised ensuring that lessons are ambitious for all pupils by introducing new curriculums. These are already having a positive impact on pupils knowing and

remembering more. However, in some subjects, the school has not identified the important knowledge that pupils need to know.

Children in early years are quickly welcomed into school life. They join in with whole-school morning activities and assemblies. This helps to build their confidence and relationships with older pupils. Children benefit from the large outdoor area. They have well-planned activities to develop their large-muscle skills and eagerly take part in immersive storytelling sessions.

There is a positive reading culture. Pupils learn to read quickly and fluently. Staff are well trained. Books are well matched to the sounds that children know. The school provides additional support to those pupils who need help in learning to read. The school's systems to check on pupils' progress in reading are not consistently focused on pupils' development of reading skills. This means that sometimes, teachers do not have a clear understanding of what pupils know and can do. The library in the heart of the school is a source of joy for many pupils. Pupils are encouraged to read at home by the newly introduced reading communication journals.

Pupils enjoy their lessons. They have eloquent discussions about their learning. Pupils have regular opportunities to revisit prior learning. The school has established systems to check what pupils know and remember. However, in some subjects, the gaps in pupils' knowledge and misconceptions are not addressed in a timely manner. Therefore, pupils do not progress as quickly as they could.

The school has high ambitions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are included in the life of the school. Staff understand their needs well. Leaders have recently improved the provision for pupils with SEND, and this is helping pupils to make better progress. However, sometimes, staff are not given the precise information they need so that they can support these pupils effectively in lessons. As a result, pupils with SEND do not make consistently good progress.

The school's curriculum for personal, social and health education develops pupils' independence and understanding of risk. They know how to stay healthy, both physically and mentally. Pupils have regular opportunities to discuss and reflect on current affairs. This strengthens their understanding of equalities. Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of different faiths. As a result, pupils show a high level of respect and understanding in discussions about religion.

The school benefits from the expertise and extra-curricular opportunities shared across the federation. The governing body maintains an accurate picture of the school and shares leaders' vision. Governors understand their statutory responsibilities well and provide a wealth of support. The school manages workload well for staff. There are effective systems in place to promote good attendance.

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 subjects, the school has not identified the important knowledge that it wants pupils to learn. In these subjects, teachers do not know precisely what pupils should know and remember. The school should ensure that teachers know the exact content leaders want pupils to learn in each year group.
- The school's systems to check what pupils know and remember are more developed in some curriculum subjects than in others. In these latter subjects, teachers do not have a clear understanding of what pupils know and can do. The school should refine how it checks pupils' knowledge and understanding in these subjects so that it can quickly identify any misconceptions and plan future work accordingly.
- The support strategies for pupils with SEND are not precise enough. This means that sometimes, some staff are not well informed about what they need to do to provide effective support for these pupils. The school should ensure that staff are provided with the information needed so that all pupils, including those with SEND, are well supported in lessons.

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 February 2019.

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	114053
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10320356
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mark den Hollander
Headteacher	Sarah Hodgkinson
Website	www.hamsterleyprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 February 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher took up post in September 2023.
- Hamsterley Primary School joined Durham Dales Federation in September 2023.
- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. Children in early years and pupils in key stage 1 are taught together. There is a key stage 2 class comprising pupils from Year 3 to Year 6.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors spoke to senior leaders, including members of the governing body and the local authority school improvement partner.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, 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.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from different year groups reading aloud.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, governors and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors analysed the responses to Ofsted's staff survey. They reviewed the responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

Georgina Chinaka, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Kieran McGrane

Ofsted Inspector

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