

Inspection of a good school: Northwood Primary School

Pendleton Road South, Darlington, County Durham DL1 2HF

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2024

Outcome

Northwood Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Zoe Beach. This school is part of Lingfield Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Nick Blackburn, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stuart Crowther.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school and full of praise for their 'great teachers'. They are keen to show visitors the school's impressive 'Street' and talk about the reading and learning that takes place there. Pupils learn a curriculum that they find interesting. They like and remember much of what they study. True to one of the school's virtues, pupils become resilient learners. Many become confident in their speaking, reading and writing.

From the start of the excellent early years, pupils learn to follow routines and treat one another with kindness. Most pupils respond admirably to adults' high expectations for their behaviour and learning. Pupils are motivated by the simple, effective behaviour recognition programme. They are keen to earn 'jewels' and receive a 'cool' reward. Significant numbers of pupils join the school throughout the school year. Pupils new to the school are made to feel welcome. Most are quick to settle into school routines.

Pupils learn a great deal about themselves and others through the well-thought-out programme of enrichment activities. For example, pupils explain how taking on one of the many leadership opportunities helped them to 'realise how confident [we] can be'.

Pupils feel safe and rarely experience bullying.

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

With effective support from the trust, leaders and staff provide well for pupils in this inclusive school. In designing an ambitious, flexible curriculum, leaders take account of the changing pupil cohorts. The school's thorough 'new-starter conversations' process is the initial point in shaping the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. Pupils, including those

with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn a curriculum that gives them plenty of opportunities to revisit important 'sticky' knowledge. This helps many pupils gain a secure grasp of what they study. Many achieve well, including in national assessments.

As one pupil said, 'Reading is a really big thing,' at Northwood Primary School. From the start of the early years, adults focus on developing children's communication and literacy skills. In Nursery and Reception classes, adults involve children in lots of purposeful discussions. Along with precise phonics teaching, this helps children to secure the important knowledge that they need to become fluent, confident readers and speakers. Pupils who find reading hard are supported to catch up. On the 'Street', there are plenty of books for pupils to pick up and read, and many do. This helps sustain pupils' interest in reading.

Teachers have a secure knowledge of subjects and how to teach them. They typically use assessment to make sure pupils, including those with SEND and those new to the school, understand key facts. In lessons, teachers draw pupils' attention to subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils use this vocabulary accurately in their work. Teachers usually provide pupils with well-judged resources and lots of time to practise what they study. For example, in mathematics, teachers took the time to make sure pupils were fluent in their work on shapes. Pupils are well placed to attempt more complex learning. However, at times, some teachers do not use suitable activities or resources to help pupils learn best. Where this is the case, pupils lose focus, and their learning slows.

The school is thorough in its identification of the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders make sure that these pupils receive the right support to access the full curriculum and other activities on offer.

The school provides comprehensively for pupils' personal development. Pupils are prepared well for their futures. For example, they learn the features of positive relationships and understand that friendships have their ups and downs. So, while there can be fallings-out between friends, these are brief and swiftly resolved. Pupils also develop a mature understanding of diversity and equality.

Teachers make clear their expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils, including those new to the school, develop positive attitudes to their learning. They support each other as they go about their learning. Sometimes, a few pupils' conduct falls below staff's high expectations. Teachers use the school's behaviour processes to manage these instances effectively. This means learning normally proceeds with little interruption.

Most pupils' attendance is high. This is not the case for some others. The school makes all reasonable efforts to ensure pupils attend well. This is helping to improve the attendance of pupils who do not attend as often as they should.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They receive a wide range of training and are well equipped to carry out their roles. Leaders take suitable steps to reduce staff's workload. Parents hold the school in high regard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teachers use learning activities and/or resources that are not well matched to pupils' needs, and do not check with sufficient rigour that pupils have understood what teachers intend for them to learn. When this is the case, pupils' attention drifts and their learning slows. Leaders should ensure that teachers match learning to pupils' needs, so that pupils achieve equally well in each subject.

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 January 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	142462
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10315581
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	394
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stuart Crowther
CEO of the trust	Nick Blackburn
Headteacher	Zoe Beach
Website	www.northwoodprimary.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Lingfield Education Trust.
- The school admits children from the age of three.
- The school does not make use of alternative providers.
- The school runs 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; spoke with 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.

- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher and with other members of the senior leadership team responsible for safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, geography and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors visited lessons, reviewed curriculum documents and spoke with curriculum leaders and teachers. Inspectors also spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- An inspector met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and visited lessons to see how pupils with SEND are supported to learn.
- Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils to understand their experience of school.
- Inspectors held meetings with representatives from the local governing body, and the trust's chief executive officer and deputy chief executive officer.
- Inspectors scrutinised records and actions relating to attendance and records of pupils who have joined or left the school roll.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey. They considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.

Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Waugh

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.

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/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024