Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Cockton Hill Infant School

McIntyre Terrace, Cockton Hill, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 6HW

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 December 2024

Outcome

Cockton Hill Infant School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend Cockton Hill Infant School. They are full of enthusiasm when discussing the opportunities that the school provides for them. Due to the supportive environment, pupils are cheerful and confident. They are encouraged to be respectful and to learn from their experiences. Pupils are also polite and kind. They look out for one another. Pupils value the care they receive from their teachers. Pupils, parents and carers appreciate the strong sense of community in the school.

Pupils achieve well over time. Staff quickly find out what pupils can and cannot do. For pupils who need extra help, the school puts expert support in place. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) enjoy tailored support. Children in the early years overcome any barriers to learning. There is a successful focus on communication. This helps the youngest children get off to a positive start.

Pupils learn vital skills for life. Children in the early years begin to take on different responsibilities. They grow pumpkins in forest school and tend chicks in springtime. Older pupils experience a range of exciting clubs and trips. For example, they love to share their local history following a visit to a nearby castle. On this and other trips, they gain confidence and social skills beyond the classroom.

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

The curriculum is well designed. Key skills in English and mathematics are prioritised. Phonics begins in the early years. Well-trained staff deliver sessions to groups of pupils. Pupils relish this learning and make strong progress through the phonics curriculum. If pupils fall behind or have low starting points, staff support them well. Over time, pupils

become confident readers. They enjoy story time every day and borrowing books from the pop-up library.

Children in the early years learn to master the basics of number. They confidently use mathematical language. For example, in Nursery, children sort small objects into piles. They discuss which are bigger and smaller while practising their counting. This prepares them well for their next steps in learning. However, in some lessons, learning tasks do not support the aims of the curriculum well enough. When this is the case, pupils' progress through the curriculum is slower. For some pupils with SEND, the adaptations to the curriculum do not help them achieve as well as their peers.

The wider curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils enjoy learning a range of different subjects. Pupils' recall from these subjects is impressive. For example, they talk animatedly about history. They understand the importance of historical figures such as Florence Nightingale. The school ensures pupils remember important knowledge through effective checks on learning. Pupils enjoy showing staff what they have learned.

The school has responded well to the changing needs of the pupils. With the support of external experts, they have developed a 'nurture' provision in school. Here, some pupils with SEND receive valuable support. They learn how to manage their emotions. Pupils also learn important social skills to help them thrive in the school. Over time, the school carefully withdraws support to help pupils to become increasingly independent. Parents are impressed with how the school helps their children to succeed.

Pupils respond positively to staff in the school. The warm, respectful relationships are a notable strength. Staff use praise to encourage and motivate pupils. Pupils rise to this and try to do their best. Instances of poor behaviour are extremely rare as a result. Pupils are excited about coming to school. However, some pupils do not attend as often as they should. They miss out on the opportunities the school provides.

The school teaches pupils how to keep safe in the wider world. For example, pupils confidently discuss ways they can protect their identity online. Children in the early years have a developed understanding of how to stay healthy. At lunchtime, they discuss which foods are the most nutritious. In the early years classrooms, children quickly learn the routines of the setting. As they move from Nursery into Reception, they grow in independence. Children manage their own learning. For example, they ensure artwork is carefully laid out to dry when they have finished painting.

Governors commit to supporting leaders in the school. Everyone shares a common goal. This is to provide pupils with the best start to their educational journey. Staff love working at the school. They say the school values their work. They know leaders recognise the importance of a positive work-life balance. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They celebrate how the school has helped their child progress.

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 lessons, tasks do not help pupils focus on the important knowledge they should learn and remember. This slows their progress through the curriculum and hinders some achieving as well as their peers. The school should ensure that learning supports the aims of the curriculum well and is adapted where necessary to help all pupils, including those with SEND, reach the same ambitious goals over time.
- Some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. These pupils miss out on the learning and experiences that the school provides. The school should further develop its understanding of barriers to good attendance, working with parents, pupils and external agencies where needed.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in May 2016.

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	114111
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10346294
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Robert Woods
Headteacher	Thomas Cuthbertson
Website	www.cocktonhill-inf.durham.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 December 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has nursery provision for two-year-olds.
- The school does not currently use 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 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 over the course of the inspection. The inspector also held a phone call with a local authority representative.
- The inspector spoke with the chair of governors and three other governors. She reviewed documentation relating to governance, including minutes from governor meetings.

- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 met with groups of pupils and staff formally throughout the inspection and spoke with them informally at social times and in lessons.
- The inspector reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Hannah Millett, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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