

Eppleton Academy Primary School

Church Road, Houghton le Spring, Tyne and Wear, DH5 9AJ

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good		2
Quality of teaching	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding		1
Leadership and management	Good		2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children enter the school with skills that are below what is typical for their age and make good progress in the Reception class due to good teaching.
- From a low starting point pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress in mathematics. They reach broadly average standards by the time they leave in Year 6.
- Teaching is consistently good and some is outstanding. Teachers know their pupils well and effectively plan work that meets their needs. They have good questioning skills and also inspire pupils to learn so that they engage well in all lessons.
- Teaching assistants are very effective at ensuring pupils with a wide range of specific needs make good progress in their learning.
- The school's inspiring curriculum provides rich and varied activities both in and out of school. It meets pupils' needs exceptionally well by broadening their horizons.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding as the school has high expectations and pupils respond well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well and they have a thorough awareness of how to keep safe.
- The headteacher provides strong, purposeful and clear direction. She is very well supported by a skilful leadership team and a committed staff. They are very keen to improve standards in English and their teaching skills.
- Governors are very challenging and want all pupils to achieve well. They are very knowledgeable about the school and support the drive for improvement wholeheartedly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet consistently outstanding. Teachers do not always use time effectively or ensure pupils know how to be successful in all lessons. Best practice is not used sufficiently across the school to ensure all teaching is outstanding.
- Standards in English are not high enough. Marking does not enable pupils to reach the next level in their work. Teachers do not use reading and writing together to improve pupils' literacy skills or give pupils enough extended reading experiences. Pupils' weak handwriting skills also slow their progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons or parts of lessons, of which one was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at groups of pupils working with teaching assistants and specifically listened to Year 2 pupils read, and other year groups in lessons.
- Inspectors talked to a range of pupils, including the school council, about their work and play in school.
- Meetings were held with five governors as well as teaching staff, including senior and subject leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 11 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) when planning the inspection. They also considered staff and parental/pupil surveys completed by the school.
- Inspectors observed the overall work of the school and studied a number of documents including the school's data about pupils' current progress. They also examined documents relating to safeguarding, governance, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other evidence including school displays, its website and work representing the school's wider achievements beyond the classroom.

Inspection team

David Shearsmith, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Pauline Piddington

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than an average sized primary school.
- An above average proportion of pupils are known to be supported through the pupil premium which is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in the care of the local authority and children of service families.
- A below average proportion of pupils are supported at school action. An above average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school has achieved the Investors in People Gold, Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy Schools Awards.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is taught as one Reception class.
- The school has before- and after-school care for pupils, which is managed by the governing body.
- Eppleton School Primary Academy converted to become an academy in June 2012. When its predecessor school, Eppleton Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all lessons are outstanding by:
 - using existing excellent practice to help all staff to deliver outstanding lessons
 - ensuring that teachers use time effectively in lessons so that pupils have a longer interval to work independently and at a faster pace
 - ensuring a more consistent use of the school's 'steps to success' so pupils know how to be successful in all lessons and can check on their own learning and be challenged to reach higher levels in their work.
- Improve standards in English by:
 - enhancing the marking of pupils' writing so that they are given clear points for improvement and time to make their work better
 - linking the teaching of reading and writing together so that pupils can improve their spelling, punctuation and understanding of grammar
 - improving pupils' handwriting and presentation skills
 - developing pupils' understanding of texts through more opportunities for extended reading.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well. The school knows its pupils well and tracks their progress regularly. It sets challenging targets at all levels and is committed to ensuring all pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are typically below what is expected, with specific weaknesses in their literacy skills. They make good progress overall. This is due to good direct teaching and provision, indoors, for pupils to develop their skills. The school is in the process of developing its outdoor area to provide better opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills.
- Pupils make good progress to reach standards that are just below average by the end of Key Stage 1. Standards in mathematics are stronger than in literacy. Standards in reading and writing are showing signs of improvement as the school has begun to address the gradual decline in standards.
- Pupils continue to make good and sometimes outstanding progress across Key Stage 2 and leave with standards that are broadly average overall. Standards in English are relatively weaker and test results dipped in 2012. The school is addressing this dip and standards at Key Stage 2 are rising rapidly.
- The school has had a strong focus on developing pupils' writing skills and there is some outstanding practice. Pupils' skills are still relatively weaker as the marking of their writing does not always ensure they will reach higher levels in their work. Pupils' weaker handwriting skills and poor presentation also inhibit their progress and the quality of their work.
- Reading has been a high priority for the school. The school has a good systematic approach to the teaching of phonics (sounds that letters make). Consequently, pupils performed well in the Year 1 Phonics Test. The school has nurtured a love of reading, although pupils do not use their reading skills successfully to improve their writing skills, for example to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar. They also do not have enough experiences of reading longer pieces of authors' writing.
- Pupils known to be entitled to the pupil premium, including those known to be entitled to free school meals, make good progress. The school is effective at meeting their needs through dedicated sessions to support the progress of anyone who is falling behind, particularly at Key Stage 2. Consequently, these pupils reach standards that are above those attained by similar pupils nationally by at least one term. They also perform better than those not entitled to free school meals.
- Pupils who are disabled or have a special educational need make good progress. This is due to good support from skilful teaching assistants. The school also has a very strong commitment to ensuring all pupils that have any specific needs achieve as well as they can.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan well for the differing needs in their class as they know their pupils well. Good-quality questioning skills that interrogate pupils' knowledge and understanding provide skilled support to pupils' learning and progress.
- Where teachers use 'steps to success' well in their lessons, pupils make better progress. This was seen to good effect in a Year 5 and 6 music lesson. Pupils were effectively challenged to create a tune and also to evaluate their own learning. Pupils made outstanding progress as they knew how they could be successful in their learning and were challenged to reach a high level of musical skill. This is not always the case as pupils are not sufficiently challenged or able to evaluate their own learning and so make faster progress.
- Where time is used well in lessons, pupils make better progress. In a lesson in Year 1 pupils

were describing a setting using interesting sentences. The teacher very effectively set the scene using torches and a darkened room. This inspired pupils to learn. The lesson was well structured with well planned activities that allowed pupils sufficient time to work independently.

Consequently, pupils made outstanding progress in their learning. In a Year 6 lesson the teacher was highly effective in engaging and challenging pupils to express their own thoughts about human rights. The teacher used very effective questioning and reviews of pupils' learning to accelerate their progress. Time was used very efficiently and pupils knew how to be successful in their learning. Consequently, they made outstanding progress.

- The use of time is better in some classes than in others. In some lessons pupils do not have sufficient time to learn for themselves. Too much time is spent on the carpet listening to the teacher. Consequently, pupils do not have enough opportunities to work independently and at a faster pace.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. Pupils respond well where comments give clear points for improvement. There are examples of excellent marking where teachers not only give points for improvement but also time to respond to these. The school has implemented a policy of using a green pen for pupils to improve their work. This is used particularly well in Years 5 and 6 and pupils make accelerated progress. This is not consistently applied across the school.
- Mathematics is taught well across the school. A Year 5 lesson saw pupils investigating the properties of numbers. They were effectively challenged by activities which met their needs well and pupils had sufficient time to work independently. The lesson had good pace and time was used successfully. Consequently, many pupils made outstanding progress in their learning.
- Reading is increasingly taught well across the school. The school has created a new library to promote a love of reading. Daily phonics and guided reading sessions provide pupils with opportunities to develop their reading skills further. These have not yet had sufficient time to impact on standards in reading in all year groups.
- Teaching assistants provide good support in and out of lessons. Some pupils have very specific needs and these are listed in their 'pupil passport' so that everyone is aware of these needs. In lessons teaching assistants perform a range of tasks and support pupils' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils love coming to school. They are keen to come to school every day and said that school is like a 'big family' and that they have good teachers who help them to learn. They play together exceptionally well at playtime and lunchtime and thoroughly enjoy the out-of-school activities that the school provides.
- The school provides care for pupils before and after school. This gives them a very good start to their school day. After school they have opportunities to do their homework as well as a range of other activities that supports their learning and progress.
- Most pupils attend well as they enjoy working and playing with their friends. Attendance currently is broadly average and the school has a very good range of strategies in place to improve attendance further, including, for example, rewarding pupils for their good attendance. The school's curriculum provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of keeping safe. They have a thorough knowledge of how to keep safe, including fire and water safety and how to keep safe on the internet.
- Pupils said that bullying is rare and that if any falling out did occur they were confident that it would be sorted out. The school regularly talks to pupils about how to relate to each other and what constitutes bullying.
- Pupils work very well together. During lessons they are keen to learn and work well as partners and in groups. In a music lesson in a Year 5/6 class pupils collaborated exceptionally well to produce a piece of music and, as a result, made outstanding progress in their learning.
- The school has strong links with the local church and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is paramount in their personal development. An excellent assembly during the

inspection developed pupils' understanding of trust. Pupils sang enthusiastically and tunefully. A strong reflective moment, by the headteacher, was outstanding in further developing pupils' understanding of this topic.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's strong and purposeful drive to improve the school has ensured that it has good systems in place to promote further improvements. She is very well supported by an effective leadership team and a dedicated staff who are keen to improve their teaching and the standards in English. The school is very committed to ensuring pupils have an equality of opportunity to achieve as well as they can.
- The school has a very rigorous system in place to check on how well it is doing. These so-called 'Ofsted Teams' rigorously analyse the information that the school collects about its performance. They use this to check on progress. As a result, the school's information about its performance is accurate. They have also identified very clear points for improvement that are having a positive impact on pupils' achievements.
- Performance management is used well to improve teachers' performance in the classroom and they are appropriately rewarded for their endeavours as leaders and as teachers. Staff have access to good-quality training and professional development. The school has also recognised the need to use existing outstanding practice to improve all teaching to outstanding.
- The school's curriculum meets pupils' needs well and broadens their experiences of the local community and further afield. It provides memorable experiences both in and out of school that inspire pupils to learn. The annual residential trip to 'Derwent Hill' in the Lake District introduces pupils to outdoor experiences that are thoroughly enjoyed. Good links between subjects promote pupils' basic skills in all areas. The teaching of art, science and physical education are particular strengths of the school.
- The school's leadership has a very strong commitment to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have access to many activities that enrich their understanding of other cultures as well their own.
- The school is very effective at engaging with parents. It holds well attended 'family learning workshops' that promote parents' knowledge of the school's work. A number of strategies are used to communicate with parents, including the school's very good website, text messages and school newsletters.
- Partnerships are strong and the school links with a number of other schools to support further improvements. It also links with a range of services to support pupils with specific needs.
- The school's safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are extremely knowledgeable about the school, including understanding the school's evaluation of its progress. They have a thorough understanding of the school's and national data. Consequently, they know of the school's need to improve its standards in English. Because they participate in the school's 'Ofsted Teams' they also have a good appreciation concerning the quality of teaching. Governors manage the school's finances well and are able to explain the rationale behind the use of the pupil premium to improve pupils' progress. They are rigorous in using performance management to raise standards and ensure that teachers are rewarded appropriately for their performance. Governors visit the school regularly and are well trained. They support and challenge the school well to improve further.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138213
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	413030

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Academy Converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Johnson
Headteacher	Carolyn Murray
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0191 553 6738
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