

Gillas Lane Primary School

Seaton Avenue, Houghton le Spring, Tyne and Wear, DH5 8EH

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most children start school with skills that are well below those typically expected for their age. They make good progress and achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils continue to make good progress across Key Stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics to reach average standards by the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement from their individual starting points.
- Pupils read widely and avidly. The school promotes the enjoyment of reading well.
- Teaching is good. Questioning is used well in all lessons to develop pupils' understanding and ensure they make good progress.
- Pupils feel happy and safe in this very caring and nurturing school. They behave well in lessons and around the school and demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress owing to high-quality intervention and support.
- The strong and determined headteacher is well supported by the effective deputy headteacher and experienced governing body. Together they have had a speedy and positive impact on teaching and outcomes for pupils in this improving school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, teachers spend too long explaining what pupils have to do. When this is the case, pupils do not have enough time to practise new skills.
- Marking does not always tell pupils how to improve their work. Presently, there are too few opportunities for pupils to return to their work and make improvements.
- Progress is not always as consistently good across the ability range in writing compared to reading and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons and parts of lessons. Three observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also observed groups of pupils taught in small groups and listened to pupils from different year groups reading.
- Discussions were held with a range of pupils, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the overall work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's data about pupils' current progress. In addition, the inspectors looked at documents relating to safeguarding, governance, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector took note of the school's most recent survey of parent views. There were insufficient responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to allow results to be shown.
- The inspector looked at a range of other evidence, including displays, the school's website and evidence representing the school's wider achievements beyond the classroom.

Inspection team

Margaret Armstrong, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Gillas Lane is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is higher than average. This is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Some pupils are taught in mixed-age classes because of the small size of the school.
- The school extends its services in that it provides a breakfast club each day. It also works in close collaboration with local schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers always spend the right amount of time introducing new learning at the start of lessons and allow enough time for pupils to practise and learn new skills
 - making sure the marking of pupils' work gives clear pointers for improvement and time is provided to correct work in the next lesson
 - sharing more effectively the best practice in teaching and providing training that matches specific needs so teachers can improve the quality of their teaching.
- Improve standards in writing, particularly for lower-ability pupils, by:
 - improving pupils' handwriting, presentation and grammatical skills so that pupils are more fluent in their writing and reach a higher standard
 - ensuring that pupils are able to use their understanding of the sounds that letters represent (phonics) to improve their spelling of words and to make them more confident when writing new words
 - widening opportunities to write at length across the full range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good in this rapidly improving school. Following a period of staff changes, significant strides have been made in improving teaching and securing better outcomes for pupils.
- When children start in the nursery their skills and knowledge are well below those typical for their age, with particular weaknesses in their literacy skills. They make good progress in all areas of learning. Skilful adults settle the children quickly and help them to develop their speaking and listening skills well.
- Pupils make good progress across Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. This is due to good teaching which meets pupils' needs well.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4. Progress speeds up in the mixed Year 5 and Year 6 class because teaching is outstanding and this motivates pupils to learn. Consequently, standards are improving and are broadly average by the time pupils leave Year 6.
- Pupils make good progress in reading because the school has a strong commitment to ensuring all pupils read widely and often. In the Year 1 national screening check, they performed close to the national average because the school has developed a good approach to teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). Nevertheless, pupils are not always able to apply their skills when attempting to spell new words and this slows down their progress in writing.
- The progress pupils make in mathematics is improving rapidly. This is because teachers are planning more opportunities for pupils to work on tasks which challenge their thinking. In addition, the introduction of new teaching programmes, is helping all pupils make better progress in developing their calculation skills.
- New approaches adopted to improve pupils' descriptive writing are proving very effective. As a result, the most able pupils make rapid progress in developing advanced writing skills and achieve very well. Less-skilled writers do not always make progress at the same rate as their skills in handwriting, grammar and punctuation are weak. Presently, there are insufficient opportunities to write at length in different subjects.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to ensure that pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals achieve as well as other pupils. Funds are used to give access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities and to provide additional resources when they are needed. As a result, in 2012 pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals performed as well as their classmates in writing.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well. Additional support provided by teaching assistants helps individuals and small groups of pupils to catch up with other pupils in the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because provision is tailored well to their needs.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and on occasions, it is outstanding. This is because senior leaders have worked diligently to improve teaching since the last inspection.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are strong. Teachers are enthusiastic and provide pupils with activities that inspire them to learn. As a result, pupils are eager to do well in lessons. For example, in a very effective lesson in the Year 5 and Year 6 class, pupils made outstanding progress in developing their mathematical understanding. This was because the lesson was planned skilfully to encourage pupils to think strategically when working together to solve the 'Jumping Frogs' challenge. Pupils worked very productively together to investigate number patterns and explain their reasoning.
- In the most successful lessons, teachers have high expectations and they make it clear to pupils

what they are going to learn. They use questioning very confidently to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. This good practice was seen in an English lesson in Year 1 where the teacher demonstrated expertly how pupils should use interesting adjectives to improve their descriptions of Cinderella. She extended learning by posing challenging questions and carefully monitoring achievement. As a result, pupils made good progress in learning how to improve their writing using new vocabulary. From time to time, lesson introductions are too lengthy and learning is repetitive. When this is the case, the opportunities pupils have to practise and develop new skills are limited.

- In the Reception class, children are provided with ample opportunities to develop self-confidence when talking to other children and adults. This was seen in an outstanding literacy lesson where children spoke excitedly to a partner and when joining in with the actions to 'It's my turn then it's your turn!' As a result, children made brisk progress learning how to express themselves clearly and listen carefully to one another. This prepares them well for the move to Year 1.
- Although pupils make good progress overall in writing, it is not as brisk as in other subjects because teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length. Expectations of pupils' handwriting are not always high enough because there is insufficient focus on teaching the correct letter formation and pencil grip.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and contribute strongly to learning. They provide extra specialist help through planned individual programmes for pupils and this ensures pupils in receipt of the pupil premium and those with special educational needs reach their full potential.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and always provide pupils with feedback on the quality of their work. However, marking does not consistently suggest how pupils can improve, and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to make the improvements that teachers have identified.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in this caring, supportive and nurturing school. Pupils thrive thanks to the school's commitment to their personal development and well-being. Consequently, pupils are thoughtful, considerate and kind. For example, in a 'Good Achievement' assembly, pupils behaved well, listened respectfully and congratulated other pupils who had been praised for excellent work and good attendance.
- Attendance is average and improving. As a result of the school's well-defined initiatives to work with families and to encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually, the number of persistent absentees has reduced.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences are broad and exciting. They underpin pupils' personal development and ensure pupils achieve well in all aspects of their work. Pupils readily take on responsibility as school councillors and playground friends. They play an active part in the life of the school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe in a range of situations, including when using the internet. The school gives a high priority to ensuring that pupils understand the different types of bullying in school. Pupils said there was no bullying in their school because the headteacher would not tolerate such behaviour and this view is supported by the school's records. Special events, including 'Anti-Bullying Week', are instrumental in helping pupils learn useful strategies to deal with bullying should it occur. In the words of one pupil, 'My school is caring and safe because everyone looks after us very well.'
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are keen and attentive and participate fully in lessons. The daily 'Nurture Group' provides effective support for pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour and enables them to join in all aspects of school life.
- The school provides a wide range of sporting activities that support pupils' well-being and fitness. Leaders, and governors are now focussing on ensuring that the proportion of pupils participating competitive sports is strengthened even further. The school also provides a breakfast club that gives pupils a good start to their day. These activities, coupled with the high-

quality lunches the school provides, make a good contribution to pupils' health and well-being.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, well supported by an experienced deputy headteacher, a strong group of middle leaders and a dedicated staff, has ensured the school continues to improve. High expectations for pupils' attainment are shared by all staff and there is a strong commitment to raising standards in the school further.
- The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and judgements are accurate. The school's improvement plan reflects a good understanding of where the school needs to improve. The school has successfully addressed all the issues from the last inspection, but is aware there is still a need to quicken pupils' progress in writing.
- Higher expectations of the quality of teaching have had a positive impact on outcomes for pupils. Senior leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching across the school and take swift action to improve any areas of weaknesses. Arrangements to check the performance of teachers have had a positive impact and are linked to the expectations of pupils' outcomes. Teachers' salaries are directly linked to their performance and this is closely monitored by the governing body. There are good opportunities for teachers, including those who are newly qualified, to develop professionally.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a good range of learning opportunities enhanced by visits and visitors to school. These help to extend pupils' experiences and encourage a better understanding of themselves, the local community and the wider world. Pupils say there are many reasons why they enjoy coming to school. They talked enthusiastically about playing African drums at 'Houghton Feast', dressing up as monks in 'Bede's World' and about their experiences at Derwent Hill Outdoor Centre. Their broader academic skills are also challenged so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The school's strong relationship with parents enables them to support pupils in their learning. The school is highly regarded by parents and the community. Newsletters and a very attractive and informative website keep parents up to date with events.
- The local authority works effectively with the school. It has provided focused support and training which have led to improvements in the quality of leadership at all levels.
- The school has been successful in establishing effective partnerships with a number of local primary schools. These enrich the work of the school and enable it to make use of a range of opportunities, which support the school's curriculum and the further development of middle leaders' skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The appointment of new governors has resulted in a much wider range of experience for the school to draw on and their roles reflect their different areas of expertise. Their understanding of the school has improved because they have undertaken training to develop their skills. Consequently, they are in a stronger position to identify areas for development, to challenge the school more and to improve further pupils' outcomes.
 - A good understanding of finances ensures that the school provides good value for money. Pupil premium funding is spent thoughtfully and governors are aware of the positive impact it has had on those eligible pupils. They are also clear about the impact of the Primary School Sport funding. Governors take their responsibility for recruiting excellent teachers very seriously. For example, the appointment of a highly skilled teacher to lead the Early Years Foundation Stage has resulted in rapid improvement in children's achievement. Safeguarding meets requirements because the school and governors ensure pupils are safe, secure and cared for well.

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	108829
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	429548

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Milner
Headteacher	Terry Hambleton
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2012
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