

Ox Close Primary School

Ox Close Crescent, Spennymoor, County Durham, DL16 6RU

Inspection dates 28–29 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Standards are rising and all pupils make at least good progress from their differing starting points. Those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is good. Pupils are exceptionally keen to learn. They respond very well to adults' high expectations. The high numbers of skilled adults effectively support pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and makes an important contribution to the progress they make in lessons. They behave equally well at playtimes, cooperating with one another and with adults. As a result of the excellent behaviour, pupils feel extremely safe in school.
- Members of the governing body are very knowledgeable about the school and use this to good effect when making decisions about the school.
- The school is improving because senior leaders are firmly focused on raising standards through excellent teaching. They set a very positive example to all around them and, as a result, the school is a happy place to be. Staff are ambitious and eager to do well, recognising that they have been well supported to improve the quality of their teaching.
- There are effective systems in place to check all aspects of the school's work. This means that any weaknesses or dips in the progress pupils are making are tackled straightaway.
- Excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their sporting and musical skills make a very positive difference to pupils' motivation and self-esteem.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding. Adults do not always ask questions that are sharp enough to deepen pupils' knowledge.
- Opportunities to develop young children's language and vocabulary are not always fully promoted.
- There are times when pupils are not given the chance to write as much as they are capable.
- Some middle leaders are new to their roles and, as a result, they have not yet made a sustained difference in their area of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 22 lessons taught by 11 teachers. They also made several short visits to see pupils being taught in small groups separately from the class.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 1, 2 and 6 and talked to groups of pupils about different aspects of school life.
- The views of 40 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own survey of parents and the views of individual parents who contacted the inspectors were taken into account.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, seven members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The school's improvement plan, records of achievement, documents relating to the monitoring of teaching, attendance and safeguarding were examined.
- The inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books, as part of displays around the school and photographs illustrating their learning.
- The inspectors observed behaviour in and out of the classroom and had discussions with pupils about behaviour, bullying and safety in the school.

Inspection team

Susan Waugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jim Hall

Additional Inspector

Anne Humble

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils who need extra help with their learning and are supported through school action is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who need extra help with their learning and are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. Ten new members of staff were appointed to the school in September 2013, including the deputy headteacher and a middle leader.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to raise standards and further accelerate pupils' progress in all subjects by:
 - always ensuring that teachers' questioning deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - improving opportunities for younger pupils to develop a wider range of vocabulary and language
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write as much as they are capable in other subjects.
- Continue to develop the roles and responsibilities of recently appointed middle leaders so that they fully contribute to improving the quality of what the school does.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- In 2013, children started school with skills which are typical for their age. However, until this year, over half of children have joined the Reception class with reading, writing and speaking skills below those which are typical for their age. Adults have strong relationships with the children and know them well. This helps children to settle quickly and make good progress, so that by the time they enter Year 1, nearly all have reached the expected level for their age and standards are now above average.
- Pupils continue to make good progress through Key Stage 1 to reach standards in 2013 which were broadly average in reading and mathematics but significantly lower in writing. As a result of improvements in the quality of teaching and well-targeted support, pupils now make faster progress in writing and reach standards which are two terms ahead of those achieved in 2013.
- Increasing rates of progress throughout Key Stage 2 mean that standards are rising. In 2013, standards in reading and mathematics were above average but those in writing were below average. Improvements in writing, similar to those in Key Stage 1, mean that pupils in Key Stage 2 are also currently two terms ahead of where pupils were in 2013.
- Increasing proportions of pupils are reaching standards above the expected level because those who are capable of achieving more highly are making good or better progress. In Year 2, standards at the higher level are similar to the national average. In Year 6, standards are similar to the national average in reading and writing and above the national average in mathematics. Some pupils are reaching standards normally expected in secondary school.
- In the past, pupils entitled to the pupil premium funding did not do as well as other pupils. However, governors' very well-targeted resources and a commitment to equality of opportunity have resulted in this group of pupils making outstanding progress so that they now reach standards which are often above those of other pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because they receive good support in lessons and small-group sessions, where they practise the skills and develop the knowledge that they find particularly difficult.
- Pupils show a love of reading and pleasure in discovering the work of new authors, such as David Walliams and Michael Morpurgo, to read and enjoy. Some older pupils say reading is their hobby. Younger pupils learn to read quickly and confidently using expression. However, their understanding of what they have read is sometimes not as strong because they do not have a wide and varied vocabulary.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils settle quickly and are eager to learn. No time is wasted and pupils excitedly share their ideas and findings in lessons. In a Year 6 writing lesson, all pupils wanted to reach the high standards set and expected by the teacher. Individual research resulted in pupils creating phrases such as 'sirens wailing as sweet as Orpheus' lyre' and 'the taste of fear like the salt of the spray'.
- High numbers of staff, including some apprentices, provide effective support to pupils. They are well briefed about what is expected of them and this, combined with good subject knowledge, ensures that they recognise when pupils are struggling and then step in quickly to help them to make good progress.
- Some pupils receive additional support, working in small groups where they are successfully helped to overcome any difficulties they have. Adults have equally high expectations in these sessions and use appropriate technical language, such as 'imperative' used with a group of Year 2 pupils.
- Good progress is made in lessons because adults provide clear explanations and build up knowledge gradually. They demonstrate new learning effectively so that pupils pick up new skills

and knowledge. Teachers frequently check pupils' understanding and are adept at adjusting the lesson if pupils are struggling. In a Year 1 lesson, for example, the teacher adapted the lesson to clarify some misunderstandings about '-teen' numbers. Pupils' confusion was resolved and they moved on in the lesson with more confidence.

- Teachers offer appropriate tasks to those pupils who are able to achieve more highly. They receive work at just the correct level of difficulty to stretch their capabilities and ensure good progress.
- Very effective specialist teaching of music and sports results in pupils acquiring skills quickly and confidently. This contributes strongly to pupils' enjoyment of school and motivation to do well.
- Adults generally use questions well to gauge pupils' understanding and to deepen their learning. However, adults occasionally ask questions that only require a brief answer or accept a superficial response, and consequently learning is not extended.
- Some younger pupils have limited vocabulary and language with which to express themselves and teachers do not grasp every opportunity to extend their skills. For example, resources are sometimes limited to only familiar objects that children can already name. Additionally, some adults do not provide children with examples of how to express themselves while they are playing.
- The teaching of writing is effective. Careful planning builds up knowledge over time in a meaningful and interesting way. However, pupils are occasionally given worksheets which restrict the amount that can be written on them; as a result, pupils that are capable of writing more do not do so. This is the case in a number of subjects, including science.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In lessons, they want to learn and work diligently on tasks provided by the teacher. They work well together in groups and pairs. They have excellent relationships with all adults and appreciate the fact that 'teachers are always there for you'.
- Pupils move around school in an orderly and sensible manner, opening doors for adults and greeting them in a polite, friendly manner. In assembly, they listen attentively. Adults participate alongside pupils, acting as good role models.
- Rewards such as 'The Golden Broom' encourage pupils to take pride in their school and keep it tidy and attractive.
- Playtimes and lunchtimes are lively but sociable. Incidents are rare and resolved quickly without much adult intervention. Pupils help each other and enjoy time for conversation. Supervisory staff use the same approaches as teachers to gain attention and pupils respond promptly. When the whistle blows, pupils line up quickly without fuss.
- Parents and pupils who expressed a view confirm that behaviour is extremely good. There have been no exclusions for the last four years and very few incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils who were spoken to said that they knew of no bullying which had taken place but they were aware of the types of behaviour which bullies exhibit.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Highly effective systems are in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Policies and procedures are thorough, regularly checked and followed by all staff.
- Parents agree that pupils are safe; the large number of adults plays a significant role in ensuring that pupils feel safe and have someone to talk to.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are acutely aware of the dangers of using smartphones and computers and know how to avoid these risks.
- Pupils arrive at school promptly and enjoy coming to school. Attendance is never less than the national average and often above it.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have an uncompromising focus on excellent teaching. Staff enthusiastically report that training and individual support from senior leaders have made a positive difference to the quality of their teaching.
- Leading by example and supported by all staff, the headteacher has created a culture where all strive to improve and aim for excellence so that pupils can have the best education possible. Everyone is encouraged to find their talents and to strive 'to be the best they can be'.
- The curriculum offers pupils many chances to shine, particularly as a result of the range of musical and sport opportunities on offer. For example, pupils can learn to play an instrument and join the school's brass band. The primary school sport funding has been well used to extend the range of sports in which pupils can participate. Numbers taking part in after-school sports clubs have tripled since the beginning of the academic year.
- Some middle leaders have been recently appointed and although they are receiving appropriate training to undertake their roles effectively, they have not had time to make a big difference to the quality of teaching or to what the school provides for its pupils.
- The systems in place to check the work of the school are extremely thorough and, as a result, there is an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop. Weaknesses are quickly addressed and this has led, for example, to the improvements in writing standards.
- The school uses partnerships with other schools and organisations well to enhance what it offers its pupils and to improve the quality of teaching and leadership.
- Good partnerships with parents, through events such as well-attended literacy workshops, are helping their children to make good progress.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Policies are regularly checked and adhered to.
- The local authority is well informed about the school and provides appropriate light-touch support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good knowledge of the school, including of how well it performs, as a result of regular visits and detailed information provided by the headteacher. They use this knowledge to make astute decisions about staff appointments and how to use the funds available to them, including rewards for good-quality teaching through progression along the pay scale. They are aware of the importance of improving the quality of teaching and tackling any underperformance, and ensure that the school receives 'external' health checks to support their understanding. They use their skills effectively to offer appropriate challenge, including when managing the performance of the headteacher. They are keen to undertake training to improve their effectiveness 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	114091
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	431332

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	259
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sneath
Headteacher	Mr Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2009
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