

South Stanley Junior School

Tyne Road, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 6PZ

Inspection dates 21–22 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The high ambition and drive of the headteacher has transformed the school since the previous inspection. Underperformance has been eradicated. As a result, all pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good and, at times, inspiring and imaginative. Staff set high expectations which they expect all pupils to meet.
- Individual pupils with special educational needs and those who are potentially vulnerable make rapid progress in developing their skills.
- Behaviour in classrooms and at social times is good and, sometimes, exemplary. Pupils are very keen and eager to work hard and do well. The strong promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins their whole-hearted attitudes to learning.
- The warm, friendly, nurturing atmosphere reflects the high quality of care and support the school provides for pupils.
- The thought-provoking curriculum makes a positive contribution to the pupils' much improved achievement and their first-rate personal development.
- Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. They get on exceptionally well with each other because they treat each other with tolerance and respect. Their much improved attendance helps to support their learning well.
- Pupils are courteous, happy and friendly. They enjoy school life and take great pride in their achievements.
- The school has highly successful strategies for engaging and including parents in their children's development and well-being.
- Strong governance is robust in its challenge to leaders and managers. Consequently, they have an accurate grasp of the school's performance, including the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They have a clear view of just how successful the school can be.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not produce a consistent pattern of rapid progress and high achievement.
- Now and then, opportunities are missed for pupils to practise their skills, such as spelling, and to check precisely the improvements made and what more needs to be improved in their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons, including seven paired observations and work scrutiny carried out with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and literacy leader. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and undertook learning walks around the school in order to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils and had discussions with the headteacher, subject leaders, staff, governors and the local authority education development adviser.
- The inspectors also examined a range of documents including those related to safeguarding, the school's view of how well it is doing, the monitoring of staff performance, the school's improvement plan and records relating to pupils' progress and behaviour.
- The inspectors were unable to take account of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), due to insufficient responses, but took account of 61 responses to a very recent parent questionnaire sent out by the school. They also took account of 11 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Beckett

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- South Stanley is a smaller than average sized junior school.
- Almost all of the pupils are of White British backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than average.
- Currently, there is a well above average proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium funding. The pupil premium is funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school provides a breakfast each day available to all pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, the middle leadership team has been replaced.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress and raise achievement even more by:
 - sharing the imaginative and thought-provoking practice that exists in the school even more widely
 - maximising all opportunities for pupils to apply and practise their skills in all subjects
 - reinforcing the need for accuracy of spelling in all written work
 - evaluating rigorously what skills have been improved and what more needs to be done to secure rapid progress and high achievement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- In the highly successful drive to improve, the headteacher has demonstrated a quiet determination in eradicating weaknesses. It is paying dividends as the rate of school improvement quickens. This is evident in the rising achievement of the most able pupils and also in the closing of attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils. The success of the disadvantaged pupils is also due to the effective use of the pupil premium funding. The senior and middle leaders are a strong, tightly knit, outward-looking team who are unwavering in their push to add to the school's many strengths. Staff are ambitious for pupils and provide them with excellent role models.
- Leaders' judgements of how well the school is doing are accurate. Nevertheless, assessment of the impact of new methods or changes and what more needs to be done to secure a pattern of rapid progress and high achievement, requires a little extra precision.
- Teaching is well led and managed. Leaders and managers frequently and accurately check the quality of learning, closely matching their constructive help and guidance given to staff to relevant training. Nevertheless, at times the inventive and imaginative methods are not always shared sufficiently with all staff. Rigorous performance management makes certain that there is no automatic pay progression.
- The curriculum is broad and varied, providing a thought-provoking range of experiences that capture and hold interest well. For example, a large group of pupils were observed totally absorbed learning to beat out loud and soft rhythms on African drums. Provision for developing pupils' social and emotional skills is very good, preparing pupils effectively for the next stage of their learning and life in modern Britain and the world around them. Literacy and numeracy have the highest priority, although occasionally opportunities are not used enough in all subjects to practise writing skills and improve spelling accuracy.
- School leaders promote equal opportunities well. Pupils from all backgrounds and starting points are thoughtfully included in all aspects of school life. Any form of discrimination is not tolerated.
- The primary school sport funding is utilised very effectively to develop staff coaching skills, raise participation and foster higher skills across a diverse range of sports, such as climbing, ice hockey and netball. This includes developing links with a range of partners and local sports clubs.
- Safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet requirements. The school staff are particularly adept at identifying any pupil who is potentially vulnerable.
- The local authority has a detailed and accurate view of the school's performance. It offers challenge and support in equal measure. Specialist training has been particularly effective in developing leadership and management skills.
- The school's own recent parent survey reveals a high level of support for the school. This is evident in the contribution parents are making, using homework as a meaningful learning experience for their children.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The members of the governing body have a precise view of the school's performance, because they carefully reflect upon and check the well-being and outcomes for pupils. This includes ensuring there are no gaps in the performance of disadvantaged pupils when compared to other pupils in the school and nationally. They are 'not prepared to compromise on quality'. Governors have a detailed grasp of school data and of the quality of teaching. They take full advantage of available training to extend their skills and experience. They also make certain performance management is rigorous to ensure teaching is good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Sometimes, it is exemplary. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They thrive in the happy and friendly school atmosphere. This is evident in their rising attendance. The highly positive school ethos, securely based upon British values, gives the pupils the confidence to work hard and succeed.
- High expectations, excellent, crystal-clear boundaries for their conduct and regular use of meaningful praise, all contribute to the pupils' excellent attitudes to their learning and improving achievement. This is evident in the popular breakfast club at the start of the day and in lessons throughout the day.
- At social times, whether in the dining room or in the playground, pupils' behaviour is good. They are sensible and responsible. Pupils move around the building extremely well and create no fuss when moving

from the carpet to group tables in classrooms.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils remark that they feel safe and secure. All parents agree. Pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of the different kinds of bullying. In conversations, pupils report that bullying is an infrequent experience in school. School records confirm this to be the case. Pupils are well aware of what to do and who to go to should they need any help or support.
- Pupils benefit from effective teaching that provides them with the skills to recognise risk and danger. For example, learning how to be safe and avert cyber bullying when using new technology. When they play together or are walking to the bus, they are safety conscious and responsible.
- Attendance has improved to above the national average, as a consequence of the school's effective strategies. School staff take prompt action to help and support families where their children's attendance is sometimes irregular.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching and the quality of classroom support are good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils enjoy learning in practical and fun ways, including visits, visitors and discussing with a partner to develop successfully a broad range of skills, extend knowledge and deepen understanding.
- Interesting opportunities to learn capture pupils' interest and inspire their thinking well. Added interest is injected into learning by using themes, such as space and light, to link subjects together in thought-provoking ways. The use of problems or puzzles to be solved encourages pupils to think logically and explain their decisions or solutions, although now and then opportunities are missed to practise their skills even more.
- When progress is fastest and achievement highest:
 - tasks are thoughtfully shaped to meet the abilities and needs of each pupil
 - excellent relationships in classrooms create a very positive working atmosphere in which pupils achieve highly
 - questioning constantly checks, tests and stretches pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - helpful and accurate marking ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and exactly how they can improve
 - skilled classroom support staff quickly identify any gaps or misconceptions in pupils' knowledge and understanding and swiftly get to the bottom of any difficulties they may have.
- When the progress is less quick and a little variable:
 - activities lack the essential spark and imagination to provoke curiosity, capture and hold pupils' interest
 - pupils do not regularly practise skills in all subjects enough, particularly their writing skills
 - questioning does not always challenge pupils' thinking enough to deepen their understanding
 - pupils who can cope with extra challenges do not always tackle work which is demanding enough
- When progress is rapid and achievement is high, pupils are encouraged to think creatively and work things out for themselves or with a partner. Questioning constantly puts pupils' thinking to the test, such as when composing a hard hitting, attention grabbing newspaper headline such as, 'Curtains collapse, crazy crisis!'
- Teachers' mark work frequently and accurately. They make sure that pupils are clear about what they have done well against their challenging targets and what further action they need to take to meet them.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils settle quickly and happily in the cheerful, family atmosphere. From their low starting points on entry, progress in reading, writing and mathematics has accelerated considerably since the previous inspection.
- At the end of Year 6 in the 2014 national tests, provisional results reveal that standards in reading, writing, mathematics, spelling, punctuation and grammar rose significantly. The dip in standards in

mathematics, identified at the previous inspection, has been addressed. Although standards were below average, the decisive action taken by school leaders in tackling underperformance has ensured that progress rates in all subjects are accelerating quickly and attainment is rising year on year.

- Wide-ranging improvements in the quality of teaching over time are leading to large gains in achievement. Inspection evidence confirms that the current Year 6 is on track to achieve well and to reach broadly average standards in all subjects, although weaknesses in spelling accuracy remain.
- A higher proportion of pupils than typical exceed what is expected of them and more of the most able pupils are now on course to reach the highest levels
- Those pupils with special educational needs and those who are potentially vulnerable make the same good progress as their classmates. In a few individual cases, progress is exceptional, especially in the development of their social and emotional skills. This is because pupils are fully included in all activities, their needs accurately pinpointed and their work thoughtfully adapted when required.
- Careful thought is given to the needs of the most able pupils to ensure they receive a high level of challenge to their thinking. Consequently, their achievement is rising continuously with increased proportions working above expectations for their age. They are increasingly confident and skilled when analysing a problem, making deductions and explaining their ideas and solutions, such as when assembling a newspaper report.
- The school is successfully narrowing the gap in standards between non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged pupils, both within school and with other pupils nationally. The wide gaps of close to three terms evident in 2013 national tests in reading, writing and mathematics between the school's disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are being systematically eliminated. Current Year 6 pupils are predicted to be in line with other pupils within the school and other pupils nationally by the time they leave Year 6.
- The school places a high priority on fostering an enjoyment and love of reading. Consequently, skills are improving rapidly across all ages and abilities as pupils become 'hooked' on reading. Younger pupils read increasingly confidently, fluently and accurately. In Year 6, pupils are well informed about authors and themes. They value the reward of being able to go into the 'Shed of Success', close the door behind them, sit on the beanbag and read quietly.

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	114031
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	442241

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kath Dawson
Headteacher	Eileen Martin
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2012
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