

Ox Close Primary School

Ox Close Crescent, Spennymoor, County Durham DL16 6RU

Inspection dates

6–7 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher and the head of school are uncompromising in their drive to ensure that all members of the school community achieve the school motto of 'Be the best you can be'.
- Governors are highly skilled and ambitious for the school's future. They use their collective expertise to improve pupils' outcomes, both socially and academically.
- Well-structured and skilled teaching of phonics in the early years and key stage 1 ensures that, by the end of Year 1, pupils have very strong phonics knowledge.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to meet pupils' emotional needs. They know the pupils very well and this secures the warm and trusting relationships that exist in the school.
- Ambitious leadership and excellent teaching from teachers and teaching assistants have ensured that children in the early years thrive both academically and socially.
- Leaders provide excellent opportunities to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils discuss and debate issues in a sensible and mature way. They show respect for others' ideas and promote equality for all.
- Skilled teachers and support staff are highly trained and demonstrate strong subject knowledge.
- The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is effective. As a result, pupils make good progress in these subjects. However, leaders recognise that the progress of boys is less strong than that of girls, particularly in writing.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and mostly work conscientiously. However, occasionally, a small number of pupils lack concentration. This is particularly the case during small-group activities and when working with talk partners.
- Leaders have recently redesigned the curriculum. The quality of teaching in subjects such as history and geography is improving. However, the work pupils do is sometimes too easy, particularly for the most able pupils. Additionally, teaching is not fully effective in filling the existing gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- All staff are fully aware of the important role they play in keeping pupils safe. A strong safeguarding culture is evident.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their school and do not want to miss a moment. Attendance is above average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, are challenged to think harder about their learning in subjects across the wider curriculum
 - teachers use the recently initiated curriculum and assessment approach with consistency so that pupils' gaps in learning are identified and addressed, particularly in subjects such as history and geography
 - pupils benefit from regular opportunities to produce high-quality written work in a range of subjects so that more pupils, but particularly boys, can make even stronger progress in their writing across the school.
- Ensure that all staff have the highest expectations of behaviour to promote consistently impeccable conduct across the school and in pupils' attitudes to learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The new leadership arrangement has strengthened the school's effectiveness considerably. The executive headteacher, head of school and governors have a clear passion and determination to improve the school and to support the community in which they serve.
- In all aspects of their work, leaders and governors promote the school motto of 'Be the best you can be'. They have high expectations and work tirelessly to support everyone across the school to excel and flourish. Leaders are highly effective in their approach. As a result, they have strengthened the quality of teaching across the school.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for pupils. They know the pupils well and are determined to support each individual so that they achieve highly. Leaders' reflective approach and timely actions and the exemplary way in which they model high expectations on a day-to-day basis ensure that pupils make good and improving progress, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The head of school strongly supports the executive headteacher. Together, they ensure that all staff receive high-quality tailored support and training so that they continuously improve their practice. Staff are highly effective in their roles. Leaders' recent focus on improving teachers' questioning skills has strengthened teaching considerably across the school.
- Senior leaders and governors are mindful of teachers' workload, removing unnecessary tasks where appropriate. All staff are highly valued. Staff respond positively to the high expectations set for them and are appreciative of the wide range of high-quality training opportunities provided by leaders. As a result, staff morale is high.
- Subject leaders are highly enthusiastic about their roles. They are fully involved in improvement planning and school development. Subject leaders meet frequently to discuss and plan their work, focusing relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Strong progress for pupils across the school shows that they are successful in their drive.
- The executive headteacher and head of school have a very clear vision for the curriculum. Together, alongside subject leaders, they have created an inspiring curriculum. Teachers' professional development has ensured that the quality of teaching in wider curriculum subjects, such as history and geography, is improving. However, there remains work to do before this is fully embedded.
- Leaders plan excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn to take account of the views of others through discussion and debate. They display a good understanding of bullying, including racism and homophobia. Pupils take part in activities to raise funds for charities and learn about the cultures and beliefs of others. As a result, leaders prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain and the next phase of their educational journey.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) demonstrates strong leadership. She is passionate in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). She insists that all staff fully implement high-quality support plans to ensure

that these pupils make very good progress. She checks rigorously on the effect of teaching strategies used and, where necessary, changes them to ensure effective support for pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND make very strong progress.

- Leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils very well. For example, pupils work in focused groups and receive additional teaching where necessary. The vast majority of disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress from their different starting points, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders successfully use the sport premium funding to improve the effectiveness of physical education (PE). Pupils and staff benefit from working closely with PE experts to enhance their knowledge and skills. The leader has increased the range of sporting competitions and after-school clubs. She monitors pupils' participation in these events carefully to ensure that they are appealing to pupils, and also inspiring and motivating them.
- The vast majority of parents and carers are extremely positive about the quality of education provided by the school. Parents are particularly complimentary about the school's commitment to their children's well-being and the progress that they make. One parent spoke for many when she said, 'My children run to school, they cannot wait to get there, and they are buzzing to tell me everything when they come home.'

Governance of the school

- Governors are highly effective. They are dedicated and committed to school improvement. Through holding leaders to account, they have ensured that teaching has continued to improve across the school.
- Governors bring a broad range of skills and expertise to their roles. They use these skills highly effectively to support school improvement. They regularly undertake an audit of their skills to ensure that they continue to have the correct balance of knowledge and expertise needed to manage their duties successfully. The governor development plan outlines precise actions for continued improvement.
- Governors know the school exceptionally well because they receive a wide range of information from senior leaders. All leaders work closely with governors to share their work. As a result, governors challenge leaders skilfully because of their excellent knowledge and understanding of the school's performance. Governors' minutes show that they pose insightful questions to all leaders.
- Governors ensure, through careful checking and evaluation, that spending of additional funding for pupils' sporting development and disadvantaged pupils is effective and is having a positive result on pupils' progress and skills.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders work with staff to create a nurturing, caring environment in which every pupil is valued and cared for. Staff have very positive relationships with pupils and they know them extremely well. There is an embedded culture of safeguarding across the school.
- Leaders complete detailed employment checks on staff to ensure that they are suitable

to work with children. Leaders review the records of these checks regularly.

- The site is secure. Pupils say they feel safe and that there is always an adult on hand if they need advice or help. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to stay safe, including on the internet.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding records are well documented and up to date. They follow up referrals promptly and then systematically record their actions. Leaders are keen to support families at the earliest opportunity.
- Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training for their roles and responsibilities. They are confident and are fully aware of the important part they play in keeping children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good and continues to improve. High-quality professional development ensures that teachers and teaching assistants have the skills they need to teach effectively. This is evident in areas such as mathematics, reading and phonics. As a result, pupils make strong progress in these areas.
- Teachers work closely together. They are a team. They discuss pupils' learning and share ideas to ensure that the work they plan is very effective in supporting pupils' learning in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, there is a great deal of consistency in the skills and knowledge taught across each phase and, consequently, pupils make good progress.
- Teachers are well prepared. They demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and plan interesting activities with a focus on engaging all pupils, especially boys. They make good use of a wide range of carefully selected resources to stimulate pupils' thinking. As a result, most pupils show a good attitude to their learning and are eager to progress.
- Teachers use their questioning skills successfully to probe what pupils know and understand. They make effective use of pupils' responses to tailor learning so that pupils make strong progress, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of phonics is strong. Teaching is structured and systematic. This enables the vast majority of pupils to develop good phonics knowledge, which they use effectively in both their reading and writing.
- Reading is a strength of the school. Teachers focus on developing pupils' fluency and strong comprehension skills. Staff encourage pupils to read widely. Staff promote a love of reading. An inspector listened to a range of pupils read and was impressed by pupils' accuracy, fluency and understanding. Teachers are highly effective in embedding reading skills in pupils' learning across the curriculum.
- In all year groups, the teaching of mathematics is very strong. Pupils revisit number facts frequently so that they become proficient at number recall with speed. Teachers provide pupils with the skills to undertake problem-solving and reasoning activities with confidence and understanding. As a result, pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- Teachers value the training received to further strengthen pupils' outcomes in writing. Teachers' focus on communication and language is helping to improve pupils' writing

skills. Pupils apply their knowledge of grammar accurately in their writing. Teachers now provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills, systematically making effective connections between reading and writing. Teachers make a conscious effort to provide appealing themes to encourage boys to write more frequently.

- Teachers are beginning to provide pupils with more regular opportunities to produce written work in other subjects, such as history and geography. However, teachers have not yet secured the same high standards that are evident in English writing books. This is particularly the case for the most able learners.
- When learning in the wider curriculum, pupils are motivated by the memorable and first-hand learning experiences they have. For example, Years 5 and 6 were eager to discuss their learning about the circulatory system after recently dissecting a pig's heart. Educational visits and visitors to school also help to enhance pupils' learning.
- Teachers have started using their new curriculum approach to plan and assess pupils' skills and knowledge well across all subjects. However, too often in subjects such as history and geography, teachers do not use accurate assessment information to provide suitably challenging work for pupils, particularly the most able. Subject leaders have already started implementing actions to address these issues to enable all pupils to make good progress across the whole curriculum.
- The teaching of creative subjects is strong. Art, music, PE and dance are particular areas in which pupils excel. Pupils' understanding of musical notation, including when using music technology, participating in singing events and learning and playing instruments, is strong throughout the school.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff effectively use feedback and praise to motivate pupils and to encourage them to share their ideas with confidence.
- In the most successful lessons, teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. They establish a productive working atmosphere. Consequently, pupils remain focused and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However, occasionally, teachers have lower expectations. In these lessons, at times, pupils' concentration drifts, particularly during small-group activities and when working with talk partners.
- Parents are positive about the valuable information they receive from teachers about the progress that their children are making. They welcome the regular opportunities provided for them to understand how to best support their children's learning at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are articulate and confident. They are proud of their school and are keen to share their work. Pupils are insightful about aspects of their work that need improvement.
- Pupils discuss and debate issues in a sensible and mature way. They show respect for others' ideas and points of view. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 demonstrated their mature approach when thinking about and discussing

the morality of puppy farming.

- Pupils have plentiful opportunities to contribute to the work of the school and they take their responsibilities seriously. Members of the 'educate and celebrate forum' and 'the community group leaders' work alongside teachers to help organise community events and promote equality for all. Pupils enthused about their work in 'Pride Week', when they celebrated diversity in the school and across the community.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. Through assemblies, the curriculum and the work of the 'digital leaders', pupils gain an excellent understanding of how to stay safe online and about the potential dangers associated with social media.
- All staff promote healthy lifestyles and physical fitness. Through PE, staff develop pupils' teamwork skills, resilience and stamina effectively. Pupils can confidently discuss how physical fitness and healthy eating support a healthy lifestyle. For example, pupils discuss that sugary drinks may damage their teeth.
- Pupils understand how to manage risks. One group of pupils confidently explained how the apparatus outside is regularly checked to make sure that it is secure to protect them from harm. Others explained how they are taught to handle PE equipment safely.
- Pupils work and play harmoniously together. They learn, through many educational visits and visitors, about the cultural and religious history of different faiths.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The strong values embedded within the school's ethos and the high expectations laid down by the executive headteacher and head of school ensure that pupils typically conduct themselves well around the school. Pupils are polite and have good manners, holding doors open for adults and visitors.
- The relationships pupils have with adults and with each other are warm and trusting. Consequently, pupils enjoy their time in school and value their education.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are high, and few pupils are regularly absent.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and mostly work conscientiously. However, occasionally, teachers accept a low work rate in lessons. At these times, pupils' concentration drifts, particularly during small-group activities and when working with talk partners.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Throughout their time at the school, pupils achieve well. The progress of current pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is very strong. However, leaders are aware that progress in other subjects, for example history and geography, is not as strong.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is in line with the national average. Pupils apply their phonics skills well and swiftly learn to read with fluency and understanding.
- Pupils attain high standards in reading, writing and mathematics throughout Years 1 and 2. In 2018, an above-average proportion of Year 2 pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who attain a greater depth of learning in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently better than is the case nationally. This represents strong progress from the end of the early years foundation stage.
- For the past three years, pupils have consistently made above-average progress by the end of key stage 2. An above-average proportion of pupils attained age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. High proportions of pupils attained at greater depth, well above the national averages.
- Leaders recognise that the progress of boys is less strong than that of girls, particularly in writing. Teachers are now providing pupils with more regular opportunities to develop writing skills across the wider curriculum in subjects such as science and religious education, in an attempt to inspire the boys. Work in pupils' books is beginning to show some impact of this new approach.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils is highly effective. Leaders know these pupils very well and have a deep understanding of their barriers to learning. Leaders and teachers monitor the progress of these pupils closely to ensure that they do not fall behind. Teachers provide tailored additional support to meet the specific needs of individual pupils, with great success. Because of the specific help they receive, disadvantaged pupils make good progress over time in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Staff successfully support pupils with SEND. Teachers use assessments well to pinpoint pupils' next steps in learning. Consequently, these pupils thrive and make very strong progress over time in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new system to assess pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. Leaders identify that teaching does not currently ensure that all pupils are suitably challenged to achieve their full potential.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The early years provision is led exceptionally well. The early years leader has a strong vision and is determined that children make the best possible start to their education. The early years team works tirelessly to ensure that children make substantial progress during their time in the Reception class.
- Teachers accurately check what children know and can do. They use this information to plan tasks that extend children's learning very well.
- Relationships between adults and children are very strong. Teachers and teaching assistants know the children extremely well.

- Children thrive because they receive continuous care and encouragement.
- Children are confident learners. They listen well to one another and to adults. Children move calmly and sensibly between activities. They willingly play with each other, sharing resources happily.
- Teachers use both indoor and outdoor space effectively to create a highly successful learning environment. Staff provide children with a wide range of interesting experiences that help them to understand the wider world. Children have regular opportunities to learn through exploring and experimenting.
- Adults are skilled in using questions to help children think more deeply about their play and learning. As a result, children are highly motivated, challenged well and content because daily activities closely match their needs and interests.
- There is a strong focus on the development of early reading and writing. The teaching of phonics is highly effective. Staff make sure that children accurately blend basic sounds together so that they can identify the letters these sounds represent as they learn to read. Children are keen to handle books and enjoy spending time in the reading area, sharing a book with their friends.
- Teachers ensure that children have an advanced knowledge of number. For example, they provide opportunities for pupils to explore numbers beyond 20 and to calculate 'more than' and 'less than'.
- Teachers develop close links with parents to enhance children's learning. Families have opportunities to contribute to learning journals. They attend specific training events and 'drop-in' sessions so that they can better support learning at home. Parents are very positive about the progress their children make.
- Safeguarding practices in the early years are highly effective. Leaders have risk assessments in place to check the safety of the learning environment. All adults are well trained and vigilant and ensure that children are safe.

School details

Unique reference number	114091
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10059082

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Sneath
Executive Headteacher	Daniel Harrison
Telephone number	01388 814 860
Website	www.ox-close.durham.sch.uk/
Email address	oxcloseprimary@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2018

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding is average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND who receive additional support is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils with SEND with an education, health and care plan is lower than the national average.
- The school federated with Oxclose Nursery School in November 2018.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited teaching sessions across a range of subjects from Reception to Year 6. The executive headteacher and the head of school accompanied inspectors during most of these visits.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents provided by the school, including monitoring records, pupils' assessment information, action plans and the school's self-evaluation document. Inspectors also checked the school's records relating to safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school, subject leaders, the leader of the early years, the SENCo and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in the playground and around school. They reviewed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- A representative group of pupils from key stages 1 and 2 shared their views about the school and their learning with inspectors. Inspectors also considered the views of 46 pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- Six pupils from key stage 1 read their reading books to inspectors and discussed how the school supported their reading development.
- The inspectors scrutinised samples of pupils' work in their books across a wide range of curriculum areas. They also reviewed pupils' work in subjects such as art by considering the work on display around the school.
- Inspectors took account of staff members' opinions via the responses made to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and through formal and informal discussions.
- There were 112 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. The inspectors took account of these, along with the 51 free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke to parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Ashcroft	Ofsted Inspector
Jonathan Brown	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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