

Highfield Community Primary School

Whinfield Way, Highfield, Rowlands Gill, Tyne and Wear, NE39 2JE

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school. Select

- Excellent leadership by the headteacher, who is well supported by the assistant headteacher and governors, has ensured the school has improved markedly since the last inspection. Pupils' progress, the standards they reach and the quality of teaching have all made considerable improvement.
- Pupils make outstanding progress from starting points which are well below those typically expected for their age when they start in the Nursery. By the end of Year 6 pupils attain standards which are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is of an outstanding quality across the school. Teachers are exceptionally good at identifying the needs of all pupils and are very effective at ensuring work set closely matches individual pupils' needs. In a very small number of lessons marking and feedback do not give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve their work, particularly in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make outstanding progress owing to high-quality intervention and support.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent both inside and outside of the classroom. Without exception they are polite and caring towards each other, staff and visitors. They all feel that school is a safe and very happy place to which they enjoy coming to learn. This is reflected in their very good levels of attendance and their exceptional attitudes to learning in lessons.
- The 'Creative Curriculum' provides many exciting and memorable experiences which fire pupils' enthusiasm for learning. This contributes very well to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The governing body provides an excellent level of challenge and support for the school. Governors are fully involved in the continuous drive for improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons and parts of lessons. One observation was conducted jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also observed groups of pupils working with teaching assistants and listened to pupils read from different year groups.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher and assistant headteacher, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 21 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 13 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- 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 inspector looked at documents relating to safeguarding, governance, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector looked at a range of other evidence including school 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

- The school is smaller than the average-sized school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority or children from services families, is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standards set by the government, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Because of the small size of the school, pupils are educated in mixed-age classes.
- The school has a breakfast club managed by a private provider.
- The school is housed in a new purpose-built school building which it shares with St Joseph's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School.
- Highfield Community Primary School is in a consortium of 10 local primary schools where school-centred initial teacher training is provided in partnership with Gateshead 3-7 SCITT.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in a small number of lessons by ensuring that the marking of pupils' books consistently gives sufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve their work, particularly in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Most pupils start in the Nursery with knowledge and skills that are well below those typically expected for their age. A significant number of children have very poorly developed speech and language, and personal and social skills. Children make excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve very well. This is because of the exceptionally good levels of staff teamwork and the very wide range of interesting and engaging activities which capture children's curiosity. The teaching of phonics (linking of letters and the sounds they make) is excellent and ensures children make rapid progress in the development of literacy skills.
- Pupils continue to make outstanding progress across the school. By the time they leave in Year 6 standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Current Year 6 pupils are making exceptional progress and are on track to make a significant improvement on last year's national test results that were above average. During the inspection pupils made outstanding progress in many of the lessons seen and it was never less than good. Pupils learn extremely well together and they rise to the many challenges given, whether it is Nursery children investigating 'Texture Trays', Year 1 pupils using their knowledge of number bonds to solve simple problems or Year 4 pupils using their understanding of negative numbers to solve problems.
- Pupils read widely and enthusiastically. It is an established strength of the school, but a lot of work has gone into ensuring writing is just as good. Younger pupils are confident in using their knowledge of letters and sounds to tackle a wide range of writing. Older pupils write eloquently and use their skills equally well in other subjects. This exemplifies the excellent progress the school has made in raising standards in writing since the last inspection.
- Pupil premium funds are used well to ensure that pupils who are eligible for free school meals achieve as well as other pupils. School data show that these pupils make equally good progress and often attain higher standards than expected from their starting points. Funds are used to give access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits and to provide additional resources when they are needed.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are very well catered for. Highly skilled teaching assistants provide excellent support for pupils across the school. These pupils make outstanding progress as staff have high expectations and work is tailored to their specific, and sometimes complex, needs.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The majority of teaching is outstanding and it is never less than consistently good. Teachers are extremely enthusiastic and make learning really fun. They plan lessons in detail with work that is matched precisely to the different needs of their pupils.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes staff are highly skilled in providing imaginative activities that are well adapted for this age range. As a result, children are inspired and engage excitedly in new learning. For example, in the Reception class children worked extremely well together when designing and making 'Wild Things Hats' in the Forest School.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy their lessons. They listen very carefully and demonstrate very high levels of interest and motivation, especially when the tasks provided enable them to participate in exciting, creative activities. For example, in a Year 1 intervention group the class teacher used the text 'Pip's Pizza' skilfully to help pupils consolidate 'speed sounds'. This excellent teaching session ensured pupils made brisk progress in developing their reading skills.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are excellent and the way in which teachers organise their classrooms helps pupils to learn really well. This is because teaching staff are exceptionally skilled at planning exciting opportunities for pupils to learn in different ways. They also offer pupils a wide range of diverse experiences, for example through a residential visit to

Dukeshouse Wood and dressing up as Vikings as part of a visit to the National Centre for Children's Books as well as growing their own vegetables on the school's allotment.

- Pupils' work is displayed in very imaginative ways and this generates a real sense of pride in their achievement. For example, the very authentic 'Wild, Wild West!' display in the Years 5 and 6 classroom celebrated pupils' work across the curriculum. This is just one of the ways teaching promotes the pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- More-able pupils are catered for extremely well, with plenty of activities that provide extra challenges. This excellent practice was seen in Year 2 where pupils responded very well to the challenge of giving very precise instructions to a blindfolded partner who was attempting to make jam sandwiches. This very unique approach ensured pupils made fast progress in developing their skills in instructional writing.
- Teaching assistants very effectively support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs by carefully adapting the work and by expertly questioning the pupils to check their understanding. This was often seen during the inspection, both in classes and also in small-group work.
- Teachers diligently mark pupils' work and always provide feedback to pupils on the quality of their work. However, on a small number of occasions marking does not give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve, particularly in mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and school records indicate that it has been so for some time. Parents, staff and visitors to the school all compliment the pupils on their model behaviour. The pupils set very high standards for themselves.
- Pupils' outstanding behaviour and attitudes have a highly positive impact on learning. They say that they enjoy all of their lessons. Pupils work very cooperatively and collaboratively on tasks set. This level of collaboration fosters the high levels of self-confidence pupils demonstrate in their learning.
- Pupils say they love coming to school and feel valued as members of the school community. Those spoken to during the inspection could offer no way in which they felt school could be improved because they felt their views were already valued, respected and taken into account.
- Pupils say they feel extremely safe at school. They have a very keen awareness of the different forms bullying can take and say bullying would not be tolerated in their school. Pupils talked very sensibly about the importance of internet safety and the risk of cyber-bullying. The school website offers good additional information for parents about the importance of e-safety.
- Pupils who perform roles, such as 'school buddies', work very proactively at lunchtimes to seek out others who may want a friend to talk to or play with. Pupils describe their school as a very friendly one and a place where people respect each other. This was well illustrated in an excellent assembly where pupils eagerly applauded other pupils who had been awarded certificates for excellent work or attitudes.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility. Many pupils have special jobs and all are proud to do them. Pupils act maturely as 'school councillors' and 'eco committee members' and take their responsibilities very seriously. One excellent example of their work can be seen in the development of the school's own 'Garden Plot' which is appreciated by pupils across the school.
- Attendance has continued to improve since the last inspection and is well above average in comparison with other primary schools. This is largely due to the consistent approach taken by all staff and the importance given to attendance and punctuality in school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

The headteacher believes passionately in giving all children the opportunity to achieve as much as they can. He has high expectations of himself and others, a feature shared by everyone involved with the school, including the governing body.

The headteacher and assistant headteacher work in close partnership and provide strong and determined leadership. Their success in communicating high expectations is demonstrated in the highly effective team spirit which pervades the school.

Leaders regularly check on pupils' progress in lessons and by looking at their work. This has ensured that the school's view of itself is accurate and precise. The information has been used very effectively to identify the school's key areas for improvement. The school sets very challenging targets for all staff. Salary awards are not made unless staff members have achieved their targets. All staff have access to high-quality training and support which have improved teaching considerably over time.

- Equality of opportunity is promoted very well and any discrimination is tackled quickly. The school has used, for example, its pupil premium monies very effectively to support pupils through a range of excellent strategies so that these pupils are making equally good progress in line with their classmates and similar pupils nationally.
- The curriculum is skilfully adapted to the interests of the pupils and there are many occasions where it is extended beyond the classroom. There is a wealth of clubs, visits and visitors. Pupils say there are many reasons why they like their school so much. They talked excitedly about their involvement in the Gateshead Dance Festival, about planting bluebell bulbs in the school's woodland area and about the visits of storytellers and theatre groups. For example, a recent residential visit undertaken by Year 5 and 6 pupils to an outward bound centre was described by one pupil as 'the best time I have ever had; it was awesome'. Many of these opportunities also promote pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school through curriculum information events and family learning activities. Newsletters and a very attractive and informative website keep parents up to date with events.
- The responses to staff questionnaires show that staff are extremely positive about all aspects of the school. 'I am very proud to work in this school and I believe pupils receive a wonderfully exciting education at our fantastic school' is typical of many staff comments.
- The local authority provides good support for the school and has helped the school to improve, particularly in developing the effectiveness of teaching.
- The school, as part of a consortium of local schools, has been successful in establishing highly effective partnership work with Gateshead 3-7 SCITT. Consequently, the school has been recognised as a centre of excellence for initial teacher training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very ambitious for the school. They come from a diverse range of backgrounds and bring a broad range of relevant skills and expertise to the governing body, which enables them to offer an excellent level of challenge to school leaders. Their continuous commitment to training, coupled with the extensive experience of the Chair, ensures that they have a very good understanding of pupils' performance data and achievement. Governors are fully involved with the allocation of the school's finances, including the funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium. They ensure that teachers' pay is linked closely to their performance. Governors take their responsibility for recruiting excellent teachers very seriously. For example, the appointment of a highly skilled teacher to lead Key Stage 1 has resulted in rapid improvement in pupils' achievement. Governors ensure safeguarding systems meet requirements.

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	108351
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	412993

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	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike McNestry
Headteacher	Steve Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2008
Telephone number	01207 549882
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	stevethompson@gateshead.gov.uk

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