

Finchale Primary School

Canterbury Road, Newton Hall, Durham, DH1 5XT

Inspection dates

13–14 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has created a strong, cohesive team that ensures all pupils are carefully supported in line with the school's motto, 'we see the magic in every child and help make them sparkle'.
- Governors are very knowledgeable and well informed. They visit school regularly to monitor and assist staff. Governors work well with senior leaders and effectively support and challenge them to improve teaching and achievement.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers prepare exciting activities that ignite pupils' imagination so that they want to learn.
- Pupils achieve well and overall progress is good. This is particularly true for the most able and those with special educational needs.
- By the time pupils leave school attainment is above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics.
- In the early years, children make a good start to their learning and when they begin Year 1, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Behaviour in classrooms is consistently good with excellent co-operation promoted by the high expectations of staff. Pupils' conduct around school is impeccable. Pupils say they know how to keep themselves safe in many different situations. They explain that misbehaviour and bullying are very rare.
- All pupils thrive in a welcoming, exciting and caring environment so that they quickly become confident learners who are proud of their school. They enjoy a varied curriculum that offers wide opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In reading and writing, some middle ability pupils do not always make the progress necessary to ensure they achieve as highly as they can.
- In the early years, opportunities to learn in the outside areas are still developing and are not used as effectively as those indoors.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and several members of the governing body, including the Chair of Governors. They also spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including the school development plan, the school's data relating to pupils' progress and safeguarding documentation.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, in assembly, during lunchtimes and in the playground. They listened to pupils from Year 6, Year 1 and Year 2 read.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning including small groups led by teaching assistants. Two sessions were jointly observed by inspectors and the headteacher. Inspectors observed the feedback given to teachers following lesson observations led by the headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to several parents about their views of the school and studied 44 responses from the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- Seventeen questionnaires from staff were analysed.

Inspection team

Anne Humble, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graeme Clarke

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Finchale Primary School is a smaller than average sized primary school with an increasing number of pupils on roll since the last inspection.
- A large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A very small minority speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with a disability or who have special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There is one Reception class in the early years provision and children attend on a full time basis.
- Two new middle leaders have recently been appointed and are very new to the school.
- The school has many awards for excellence, including Artsmark Gold, School Games Gold Award and Primary Science Quality Mark (Silver).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement further in reading and writing by:
 - sharing the outstanding practice and expertise that is evident in school
 - ensuring that in reading and writing, teachers always provide work at the correct level for the middle ability pupils to ensure they make as much progress as possible.
- Extend learning experiences in the early years outdoor area to match the strong practice inside by:
 - using the skills and expertise of staff to improve the opportunities children have to learn outdoors
 - increasing children's opportunities to choose their own activities and learn on their own as well as with a group whilst outside.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and staff work determinedly to make sure pupils have the best opportunities to succeed. They have created an exciting and supportive learning environment where confident pupils enjoy school and want to learn. Pupils are prepared successfully for the next stage in their education.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and have inspired a strong ethos of continuous improvement amongst staff. This has produced very effective developments in mathematics where pupils' attainment is higher than in other subjects.
- Robust systems are in place to track pupils' progress. Information is used effectively by staff to provide help where it is most needed. This is most effective when supporting those with special educational needs and boosting the most able pupils. At times, the needs of some of the middle ability pupils are not fully met in reading and writing. However, overall equality of opportunity is successfully promoted and relationships are good.
- Procedures to evaluate the quality of teaching are rigorous. The headteacher is very skilled at identifying strengths in teaching and provides astute feedback to help staff improve their skills. Regular reviews of pupils' work have sharpened teachers' skills in marking and assessment and this has resulted in standards rising. Although staff have wide and varied opportunities to access further training, the very best practice in school is not yet fully shared.
- Teachers are held accountable for the progress pupils make. They are set targets linked to their performance and salary progression is clearly linked to pupil progress. As a result, teaching over time is consistently good across school with examples of excellent practice.
- Due to staffing turbulence, some middle leaders are new in post. However, they are effective because they have quickly recognised strengths in the school and identified areas for further improvement. More established middle leaders are also effective and have a good track record in raising achievement, especially in mathematics and in Key Stage 1. The headteacher and temporary middle leaders have coped admirably with the absence of key staff, managing to continually raise achievement during this period of change.
- A rich and varied curriculum captures pupils' interest. Many sporting and creative activities are made available to engage pupils, including educational visits and visitors. Older pupils spoke excitedly about meeting a local author who inspired their reading and writing.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very effective and prepares pupils very well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils recreated The Cenotaph and learnt about the sacrifices made by citizens during World War 1.
- Shrewd and insightful financial management by governors has allowed the school to use funds intelligently to ensure that pupils with different needs are supported well. Extra provision, paid for by pupil premium funding is minimal because of small numbers of qualifying pupils. However, it is used exceptionally well to accelerate the progress of these pupils.
- Sports funding is used successfully so that all pupils access a variety of sporting opportunities. The school participates actively in several competitions in which pupils are extremely successful and demonstrate high levels of skill.
- Staff engage parents keenly in the education of their children. Frequent opportunities to discuss progress result in most effective links between home and school. These include 'Meet the Teacher' sessions and other workshops. Governors and senior leaders promote and assist these links making them a real strength of the school.
- The highly experienced headteacher is a local leader of education and often mentors new headteachers in their first years of headship. She is committed to partnership working with other schools. Strong associations with the local secondary school help staff to extend outcomes and opportunities for pupils.
- The local authority provides a light touch approach to this effective school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are proactive in developing the school, making good use of their extensive skills, expertise and experience. Information from training, a review of data and frequent visits ensure they know the school's strengths and areas for development clearly. They are very aware of the quality of teaching and the links between performance and salary rewards. Governors challenge and support staff in equal measure, making positive contributions to the school's self-evaluation. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Governors are particularly skilful in managing finances. They monitor and

evaluate pupil premium and check that it benefits these pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct around school is impeccable. They access all areas calmly and with maturity, opening doors for one another and standing aside to let adults pass by. Pupils are friendly and polite and display good manners in the dining room and when working with visiting adults. In classrooms and in the playground, pupils co-operate well together and wait patiently for their turn. Older pupils help younger children, responsibly taking on roles to support the sharing of milk and fruit. They act as lunch buddies in the dining hall and this adds to the harmonious environment around the school.
- Teachers have high expectations for good listening and attitudes to learning. Behaviour is managed most effectively to ensure that all pupils concentrate and follow instructions. In some classrooms, behaviour is exemplary and this leads to rapid progress when pupils are fully inspired and challenged. This was particularly evident when pupils were using and applying their knowledge of mathematics to solve challenging problems linked to decimals, area and perimeter. In some classes, particularly when involved in reading and writing tasks and when not supported by an adult, some pupils are slower to settle and their concentration and interest are not fully sustained.
- Staff, parents and pupils agree that behaviour is good in and around school. In school, a calm atmosphere pervades. Pupils are held responsible for their actions if they misbehave and reflect thoughtfully upon how to improve in the future.
- Attendance is consistently above average. Absence is low because pupils are keen to attend and thoroughly enjoy coming to school. In addition to this, strong senior leadership has improved punctuality across the school by promoting awareness of the impact lateness has on their learning.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They have a secure knowledge of how to stay safe in many different situations, especially when working on the internet and when near the railway. This awareness is the result of many opportunities to learn about rights and responsibilities that prepare pupils thoroughly to be responsible citizens in modern Britain.
- Racist and homophobic name-calling seldom occurs and, if this does take place, it is stringently tackled by staff with involvement of parents so that there is no recurrence. Pupils explain that bullying is very rare in school but they are well versed in how they should respond should it ever happen.
- Staff know pupils well and are alert to any changes that may affect pupils' learning. They liaise with other agencies promptly should any child or family need additional support.
- Pupils are highly appreciative of their teachers and other staff, explaining that all adults in school look after them very well. Safeguarding procedures are effective in ensuring the safety of all pupils and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are supported to work alongside and achieve as well as their peers.

The quality of teaching is good

- Senior leaders rigorously monitor the quality of teaching and provide support and training that enhances the knowledge and skills of staff. This has resulted in teaching over time being consistently good across all classes with excellence in the teaching of mathematics.
- Interesting activities are generally matched correctly to the different needs and abilities of pupils so that they are eager to learn and highly engaged. This was typified in a Year 2 class where pupils used their creative skills co-operatively to produce a diorama (a scene created in a box) for each scene in the story of Hansel and Gretel. After this, the teacher used the diorama to inspire vivid descriptions of each scene with pupils producing excellent writing containing rich and varied vocabulary.
- Mathematics is taught exceptionally well. Staff enthuse pupils so that they are excited by mathematics. In Key Stage 2, pupils are encouraged to try their very best by tackling 'super challenges' as extension activities. Although these are often highly challenging, pupils are unreservedly enthusiastic in persevering to achieve success. These additional activities, very secure subject knowledge and teachers' high expectations in this subject lead to an increasing number of pupils reaching above average attainment and a number working at the very high Level 6. Many pupils have a passion for this subject.
- In English, teaching is good but has not had such a dramatic effect upon pupils' progress although this is

good across the school. Phonics (learning about letters and the sounds that they make) are taught effectively in Reception and Key Stage 1 so that pupils get off to a good start. Teachers provide opportunities to improve reading in Key Stage 2 by introducing class novels that inspire pupils to read and discuss the issues involved.

- Pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities are very carefully supported by teaching assistants and most able pupils are skilfully challenged. However, during some writing activities, the needs of the middle ability pupils are not always fully met. This leaves them unsure of how to maximise their progress with the tasks. At times, they struggle to get fully involved with their writing and do not make the best use of the time available.
- Teachers skilfully question pupils during discussions in a range of subjects and give clear explanations of new concepts. Pupils have targets and staff regularly praise good work and frequently explain success criteria to give advice to pupils about improving their work.
- A consistently applied whole-school policy is now used to respond to pupils' work in books. The system ensures that staff inform pupils about what they have done well and what they need to do next. Once a week, pupils respond to the comments and extension activities suggested by their teachers and as a result their work improves.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well across the school and leave school with attainment above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics.
- Progress is good in Key Stage 1 and results of national tests at the end of Year 2 were above average in reading and mathematics in 2014 and significantly above average in writing. This reflects improvements in the quality of teaching in this phase over recent years. Results of the national screening check in phonics at the end of Year 1 have consistently improved over the past three years and the number of pupils who achieved expected levels is above average. Current attainment in Year 2 is above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Good progress continues in Key Stage 2. In 2013, attainment was significantly above average in all subjects. In 2014, test results dipped linked to a particular small cohort of pupils assessed as having special educational needs and disabilities. For this group, attainment was below average in reading and writing but higher in mathematics.
- The school's own data and work in pupils' books show that the current Year 6 are achieving higher standards than those seen in 2014 tests. Attainment is above average in reading and writing. Pupils write well punctuated and imaginative text. Older pupils read for pleasure and research. Mathematics is the strongest subject and attainment is well above average. Many pupils are very skilled at solving problems.
- Pupils' progress from their different starting points is good and excellent in mathematics. In mathematics, test results indicate that the number making more than expected progress is high. However, in reading and writing, although progress overall is good, not as many as in mathematics make more than the expected progress. In particular, the middle ability groups of pupils do not always achieve as well as expected in English especially when they are left to work unaided.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are carefully monitored and receive effective support that helps them make good progress. They often attain more than a term above similar pupils nationally.
- Similarly, the most able pupils make good progress from their starting points. They are provided with work that is well matched to their needs and are offered additional curriculum opportunities, such as visits to the local secondary school for specialised projects that challenge their learning.
- The extra support provided through pupil premium funding enables disadvantaged pupils to make progress in line with other pupils. Some staff are particularly adept at supporting disadvantaged pupils and in these classes, their progress is better than others in the class. Very small numbers of pupils qualified for this funding in 2014 so comparisons of attainment at the end of Year 6 are not significantly accurate.

The early years provision is good

- Children get off to a good start in the Reception class because staff understand their individual needs. They ensure an exciting range of learning activities engages their attention especially indoors. An excellent example of this was seen when children were learning about the theme of houses and homes. They

compared similarities and differences between houses by studying photographs then went on to use their ideas to build their own model houses from recycled materials. Children tackled this task with enthusiasm and skill, manipulating tools safely and making thoughtful decisions about the materials to use.

- Teaching within the early years is consistently good because staff are experienced and skilful in questioning children thoughtfully and moving their learning forward. They observe and assess children closely and step in at just the right moment to extend and deepen the children's learning.
- Children enjoy learning in the inviting indoor classroom which has exciting activities to engage them but learning is not as good in the outdoor area which has limited activities for children to extend their skills and make decisions about their choice of activity. This has been recognised by new staff who are in the process of planning changes to the outdoor curriculum.
- Individual children have a range of skills and abilities when they join the Reception class. Generally these are typical for their age. In previous years, skills in reading, writing and number have been slightly lower than in other aspects of learning. Progress of children of all abilities is good. Staff are quick to provide extra help where it is most needed and also to add the extra challenge for others. By the time they leave Reception a large proportion achieve a good level of development and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Leadership and management of the early years have very recently changed due to unavoidable staff absence and the temporary leader is very new to the post. Nevertheless, overall leadership is effective with detailed records of what children can do and their next steps. Home visits ensure that any additional support needed by children is in place before they start school. Whilst staff have previously tracked children carefully in reading, writing and number, an overview of the progress made by groups of children in the fuller range of learning aspects has not always been available. The headteacher now has a new system in place that allows staff to monitor and compare the progress of groups of children more readily.
- Staff are vigilant in managing children's behaviour and safety at all times so that children feel safe and behave well throughout the day.

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	130312
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	449662

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	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Hopgood
Headteacher	Sandra Whitton
Date of previous school inspection	7 January 2010
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