

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Finchale Primary School

Canterbury Road, Newton Hall, Durham, County Durham DH1 5XT

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 May 2025

Outcome

Finchale Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of the 'Finchale family'. This is a friendly and welcoming school. There are high expectations of pupils. The school's work is underpinned by clear values, such as resilience, inclusivity and kindness, that are lived out every day. Pupils thrive here. They enjoy learning, feel safe and attend very well. Pupils achieve highly.

From the start of Reception, the school successfully teaches pupils the importance of kindness and respect. This ensures that pupils build positive relationships with each other. At playtime, there is a hive of activity as pupils play cooperatively and creatively together. In lessons, pupils pay attention, join in and work hard. They receive regular praise and encouragement from staff, which boosts their confidence.

The school is deeply committed to pupils' personal development. It encourages pupils to try new things and to step out of their comfort zone. For example, pupils enjoy opportunities to take part in outdoor pursuits and perform opera. There is a wide range of clubs and activities available for pupils to develop their interests and talents, such as orchestra, choir, art club and fitness.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has worked successfully to develop the curriculum so that it is ambitious and taught in a logical order. In science, pupils conduct experiments to develop their skills to work scientifically. For example, in Reception, children develop their observation skills as they track the hatching process and early growth of chicks. In Year 2, pupils develop these observation skills further when they plant seeds in different conditions, measure their growth and draw scientific conclusions.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and they use it effectively to explain concepts clearly. Teachers give pupils regular opportunities to practise and apply what they have been taught, such as completing extended writing tasks to apply their knowledge. For example, in history, pupils in Year 6 write detailed explanations of the causes and consequences of the Second World War. However, at times, teachers do not check pupils' understanding consistently well. This means that, on occasions, teachers do not identify misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge.

The school has recently started to develop some strategies to help pupils recall and embed what they have learned in the long term. However, the success of these strategies varies. At times, teaching does not support pupils to transfer previously taught concepts to their long-term memory. This means pupils sometimes struggle to connect new learning to things they have learned in the past.

Reading is a priority in the school. Staff are trained to teach phonics competently. They deliver phonics consistently well. The school identifies pupils at risk of falling behind and gives them appropriate support so that they catch up quickly. In key stage 2, pupils develop a secure understanding of reading skills, such as inference and comprehension, when they read a range of ambitious texts. Pupils enjoy reading daily with adults during story time. The well-stocked 'reading shed' is a very popular place with pupils at playtime.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn successfully. The school identifies the needs of these pupils accurately. Teachers access detailed information for each pupil with SEND. Teachers use this to inform appropriate strategies to support pupils in their learning and ensure that their needs are met. As a result, pupils with SEND engage well in their learning and progress through the curriculum well.

Pupils demonstrate excellent manners. They make helpful contributions around school to support their peers. For example, during social times, they take on the role of 'buddies' and playground leaders. School routines are embedded and followed consistently by pupils, including children in Reception. Rates of attendance are high. The school works closely with families where attendance does not meet its high expectations.

The school's work to support pupils' personal development is very effective. Pupils are proud of the fact that everyone is treated equally at their school. They appreciate the differences in other people. Pupils have an assured, age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and they know how to stay safe online. The school supports pupils with their mental and physical health successfully. It motivates pupils to complete 'Finchale fitness' activities, such as a daily run. Pupils enjoy well-being activities, such as yoga sessions, and they value being able to speak to staff about their well-being.

The school is well led. Leaders have maintained high standards over time. Staff are very proud to work at the school. They know that leaders consider their well-being and they appreciate that managing their workload is a priority. Governors play a full and active part in the life of the school. They understand their statutory duties and fulfil them well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some lessons, teachers do not check pupils' understanding effectively. This can lead to gaps in pupils' learning or misconceptions which are not identified or corrected. The school should continue to support teachers to use assessment strategies consistently to help pupils to build their knowledge securely over time.
- In some cases, the teaching of foundation subjects does not help pupils to transfer learning into their long-term memory. Some pupils struggle to remember key concepts over time. The school should ensure that its approaches to helping pupils embed learning in their long-term memory are effective and used consistently well.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in November 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	130312
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10346375
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Gayle Foster
Headteacher	Natalie Ward
Website	www.finchale.durham.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since January 2025.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector also met with members of the local governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered

the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interest first.

- Throughout the inspection, the inspector met with groups of staff. They also considered the opinions expressed through Ofsted's online staff survey.
- The inspector took account of responses to Ofsted's online parent and carer survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Dan McKeating, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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