

Rift House Primary School

Masefield Road, Hartlepool, County Durham, TS25 4JY

Inspection dates 9–10 December 2014

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.

- This is a good school which is improving rapidly because every member of staff ensures every child has the best possible opportunity to achieve well academically, personally, physically and creatively. Pupils thrive in a welcoming, positive, caring environment to become confident, young people who want to learn.
- Children in the early years get a good start to their education. In Key Stage 1, teachers build upon this good start and pupils' achievements have recently improved. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress, because they apply themselves well to the tasks they are given to complete. By the end of Year 6, most pupils are achieving the levels expected for their age.
- All groups of pupils make good progress, including those who are eligible for additional funding through pupil premium, those with special educational needs and those who are most able.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils learn effectively. Teachers provide pupils with interesting work to do which motivates and encourages them to learn.
- Pupils show high levels of respect to adults and each other. They are particularly adept at helping each other if someone gets stuck. Staff have very high expectations and a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils feel very safe in school and have a good awareness of how to keep safe in the wider community. Their attendance is improving rapidly. Pupils are very proud of themselves and of their school.
- The headteacher has created a very effective team who work well together. All staff carry out their roles effectively. The systems the school uses to review the quality of the school's work are excellent and are having a positive impact on raising pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching.
- The governors are very knowledgeable and well informed. They are also proactive in ensuring every child has the best possible chance to succeed. They challenge the school effectively and provide very good support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching at times does not fully engage every pupil in all activities. Pupils are not always entirely clear in lessons about what they are expected to learn.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work and the pupils' presentation of their work is not as good as it could be.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed parts of 18 lessons. Pupils were heard to read, and the written work in pupils' books was reviewed.
- Meetings were held with different groups of people involved with the school. These included pupils, members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the teaching staff and an officer from the local authority.
- There were too few responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parents View) to be able to access parents' opinions so the school's own surveys for parents were examined. The Ofsted questionnaire completed by school staff was also examined. The school's website was also studied.
- A range of documents including the information on pupils' achievements, school's data on pupils' current progress, documents relating to planning for improvement and procedures for checking the quality of teaching, documents relating to safeguarding and records relating to behaviour and attendance were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Barbara Hudson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alison Aitchison

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and therefore supported through the pupil premium is well above average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding allocated to support pupils who are in the care of the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Many pupils join the school throughout the academic year.
- The early years consists of a Nursery class, a full time Reception class and one Reception and Year 1 mixed class.
- Since the last inspection a new headteacher and senior leadership team have been appointed.
- The school works closely with the other schools in a learning partnership. The schools are High Tunstall College of Science, Eldon Grove Academy, Throston Grange Primary, Hart and Elwick Primary, Jesmond Gardens Primary, West Park Primary and Springwell Primary.
- The school has many awards which reflect the breadth of the curriculum. They have recently achieved the International Schools Award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement further through an increased amount of outstanding teaching by
 - making sure teachers' marking of pupils' work clearly informs them of how to do better
 - ensuring pupils have the time to respond to marking comments and that they apply what they learn from this to future work
 - regularly checking pupils' understanding in lessons to make sure they understand concepts before moving them on to the next task and ensuring activities are sufficiently paced so as to fully engage all pupils in all tasks
 - ensuring the presentation of pupils' work in their books is of a consistently high standard.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, with the support of the whole school team, works tirelessly to ensure that the pupils are given the best chance to succeed at school. They have created a school where pupils want to come to learn and are able to achieve well. Pupils feel very safe and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- School leaders have a very accurate view of the school's performance. The systems that the leaders have in place to gather and share information are exemplary, however, the targets for whole school developments are not sufficiently precise.
- Robust procedures to check the quality of teaching are in place. Lesson observations, the regular monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' workbooks, together with pupils' progress meetings ensure that senior leaders are well placed to tackle any variation in performance. This ensures that every pupil has an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Systems to manage staff performance are used well, both to support and challenge their work. The use of pupil performance data has sharpened up this area and has resulted in standards rising. The data is well used to inform individual teacher's performance management and the targets that are set for them. The headteacher is very good at providing opportunities for staff to develop and improve their practice. Staff highly value the range of training opportunities offered within and beyond the school.
- Teachers who lead a subject are very proactive in ensuring pupils make good progress and achieve well in their subject. The way in which the subjects have been put together to make a rich and interesting curriculum, which uses all of the resources available to them, is contributing to pupils' enjoyment of learning. The very wide range of sporting and creative activities, including educational visits as an integral part of the curriculum ensure provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported and pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Financial management is of a high standard. The primary school sports funding is very effectively used to provide pupils with an extremely wide range of activities in lessons and through clubs. They also have excellent provision in the playground, which is well used by pupils. Pupils are also given many opportunities to take part in a wide range of competitions.
- Extra provision, paid for by the pupil premium funding, includes focused one-to-one support in literacy and numeracy for identified pupils and enhanced pastoral intervention for those pupils and families with particular social and personal needs. The monies received are exceptionally well used. An excellent example of this is the appointment of a social inclusion assistant who has very quickly turned around some pupils' poor attendance to at least average and rising.
- The school works very effectively with other schools within the learning partnership and beyond. Leaders also work effectively with the local authority and value the advice that they receive.
- The staff work successfully to engage parents in the education of their children, resulting in a very effective partnership between school and home.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very proactive and have the skills and expertise to challenge and support the leaders appropriately. They know the strengths and the areas for improvement well. They make a positive contribution to the way in which the school evaluates itself and sets areas for improvement. They use information about pupils' progress well when they review staff performance and pay progression. They have a clear understanding of the school's finances, including pupil premium and sports funding. Governors have the required skills to hold leaders to account. The school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Governors are proactive in enabling staff to share expertise and develop skills within the learning partnership and the local authority.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils very quickly learn the appropriate behaviour and attitudes that they need to be successful in school. This is because of the very high standards set by the staff and the way in which they help those pupils who have some difficulty in managing their own behaviour to become ready for learning. This helps pupils to thrive in the caring, nurturing environment created by the staff. Pupils show high levels of respect to each other and adults, enhancing their learning experiences. Pupils

are very eager to help one another if someone is stuck with something or has a problem.

- Occasionally some pupils become restless in lessons and begin to fidget. This is most often because the time given for a task has been too long and some pupils become bored.
- Parents are very positive about pupils' behaviour and they feel that the staff look after their children very well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Thorough procedures to safeguard pupils are very effectively implemented throughout the school. Staff liaise very effectively with a wide range of support agencies to ensure that the best for each individual child is provided.
- Pupils say they feel very safe. They are aware of the different types of bullying and if any should occur, they are confident that the staff would quickly resolve the problem. They are very knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. This is because the curriculum covers a wide range of aspects about staying safe, including those relating to the use of computers.
- Pupils' attendance has been consistently below average however last academic year it improved significantly to average and so far this academic year it is above average. Pupils' punctuality has also improved. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school to learn and to see their friends.
- Parents appreciate the work the school does to keep their children safe and how they help them to be safe in the wider community.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils enjoy their learning in lessons and also in the large number of wide-ranging activities on offer beyond the school day. They are eager to do their best. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively, resulting in very positive relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons that build on pupils' skills and extend their learning. Lessons are planned well to meet the needs of different groups of pupils so that their work is not too hard and not too easy. Teachers, however do not always check that pupils have fully understood an aspect of a lesson before they move on to something different or harder.
- Most pupils listen attentively in lessons and engage well with the tasks set. A tiny minority very occasionally lose interest and become fidgety when an activity has gone on for a little too long. They enjoy opportunities to discuss their work and are particularly enthusiastic when tackling challenging activities and questions. This was very evident in a Year 5 English lesson where pupils were asked very pertinent questions about the Christmas Carol story that they had just heard.
- Teachers are providing pupils with many opportunities to improve their reading, writing and mathematics skills in other subjects. They also ensure that the skills relevant to each subject are taught well.
- Marking of pupils' work is regular. Teachers' comments are supportive, however too often the comments about how pupils can improve their work are not sufficiently precise. Pupils are not given enough time to respond to the improvement comments and pupils are not always expected to apply the advice given to their future work.
- Senior leaders robustly evaluate the quality of teaching in the school. Staff value the feedback that they receive and very willingly put into place actions to make their teaching even better.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well because the curriculum is very interesting and the quality of teaching is good. Staff are very adept at helping pupils to become successful learners. Any gaps between different groups of pupils are closing rapidly because of the headteacher's rigorous approach to analysing pupil performance and the way in which this is shared with the teaching staff.
- At the end of Key Stage 1, the standards pupils attain have been below average until 2014 when standards in reading, writing and mathematics were average. Similar improvements have occurred in the Year 1 letters and sounds screening check, where most pupils are now attaining the expected level. Even though pupils' standards were below average they made good progress from their individual starting points. Pupil progress is now accelerating.

- In Key Stage 2 pupils' standards are less than a term below the national average in reading and mathematics and average in writing. Pupil progress from their starting points is most often good and in 2013 it was significantly above average. Standards in 2014 were lower than usual because a number of pupils from other schools joined late in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' attainment in each year group is improving as the staff build upon the improvements in standards at the end of Year 2.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are carefully monitored and receive well-tailored support which enables them to make good progress. They often attain more than two terms better than similar pupils nationally.
- The most able pupils make similar good progress from their starting points. This is because the staff ensure that they are given work and support that is well matched to their needs. An excellent example of this was seen in a Year 3 reading lesson when very good questioning skills enabled pupils to work out the difference between factual information and that where they had made an inference. However the number of pupils who are achieving the higher Level 3 at the end of Year 2 and Level 5 at the end of Year 6 is lower than the number nationally.
- The extra support provided through pupil premium funding enables disadvantaged pupils to attain as well as the other pupils in their class. In 2014 disadvantaged pupils at the end of Year 6 attained standards that were the same as other pupils nationally. Pupils eligible for this funding make good progress from their starting points.
- In all subjects pupils make good progress. This is because the skills required for each subject are well developed. The quality of the curriculum, including the additional activities before, during and after school, enables pupils to make links between subjects and develop their literacy and numeracy skills well.

The early years provision

is good

- Children get a good start to their education in the Nursery and Reception classes. This is because they are provided with an exciting range of learning opportunities. An excellent example of this was seen where children were putting small pompoms onto a snowman's coat with tweezers. The concentration and accuracy that this involved ensured that they were engrossed in the activity and helped to develop their concentration and manipulation skills.
- Teaching within the early years is consistently good and sometimes better. This is because the staff are extremely adept at asking the correct question at the right time to move the children's learning on. Staff are also very skilled at helping children to develop their spoken language skills.
- Children generally join the Nursery class with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes from their starting points to acquire skills and knowledge that are closer to those typical for their age on entry to Year 1. This is because staff have to spend a large amount of time helping the children to become effective learners by being able to concentrate on a task and to be able to communicate and co-operate with adults and other children.
- Staff are very vigilant in ensuring the children are safe. They have rigorous procedures that are very well applied.
- Leadership and management is good. The records of what the children can do and have learnt are extensive but records of what each child needs to do next to improve are not always clear enough. The staff work well together even though the Nursery and Reception classes are in separate buildings. They know the children and the families exceptionally well.

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	111640
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	448745

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	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geraldine Chapman
Headteacher	David Turner
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2010
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