

Sugar Hill Primary School

Sheraton Road, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham DL5 5NU

Inspection dates

12–13 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The highly effective teams of leaders and governors have ensured that Sugar Hill has gone from strength to strength since the previous inspection. The attainment and progress of pupils, from early years to the end of key stage 2, have improved significantly and are now well above those found nationally.
- Staff have risen successfully to meet the high expectations leaders have of them. Together with the outstanding teaching, the inviting curriculum and wide ranging extra-curricular activities ensure that pupils thrive and achieve highly as they move through the school.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work as a dynamic and enthusiastic team. They know the pupils well. Very strong relationships between staff and pupils ensure that pupils enjoy school, are safe, attend regularly and are well supported when there are concerns.
- Teachers usually assess pupils' current achievements carefully and plan activities that move pupils on successfully from their individual starting points. This is not consistently the case in lower key stage 1.
- Governors have an insightful understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They hold leaders to account robustly for the impact of their work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. It contributes to the pupils' exemplary behaviour and to the care and support pupils afford one another in and out of class. Pupils' attitudes to learning are superb and the pride they take in their work is praiseworthy.
- From the moment they enter school, high expectations and well-established routines ensure that children from the earliest ages settle in quickly. Children in early years make excellent progress and now leave Reception very well prepared for key stage 1.
- Leaders are resolute in identifying anything that is not as good as it should be and get onto improving matters straight away.
- The 2016 gaps in the progress and attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities compared with their peers have been obliterated. This year, their attendance and rates of progress by the end of key stage 2 are much stronger and often above those of their peers nationally.
- Changes in the use of pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils have accelerated their progress successfully. Many are outstripping their peers in the progress they make by the end of key stage 2.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Iron out remaining inconsistencies in teachers' use of assessment information to plan activities that move pupils on swiftly from what they already know and understand, particularly in lower key stage 1.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher's aspirational vision to ensure that pupils in Sugar Hill get the best deal possible is embraced enthusiastically by other leaders, governors and staff. Leaders and governors have ensured a relentless focus on tackling the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection and improving further all aspects of the school's work. No stone is left unturned in identifying, and then tackling, anything that is not as good as it should be. Consequently, pupils' attainment and progress have improved substantially across the school, particularly in the last year, and for girls, who had lagged behind boys in some 2016 assessments.
- Leaders' resolute attention on improving the quality of teaching since the last inspection has transformed its impact on pupils' learning across the school. Leaders at all levels check the quality of learning in lessons, review pupils' work and check pupils' progress rigorously and regularly. This means that they know precisely what is happening in class. Leaders then identify actions to improve any weaker practice. Staff talk positively about the way they are held to account for their pupils' progress. They appreciate the high-quality training they receive that helps to improve their skills, and the way leaders support and challenge them to ensure that pupils achieve their best.
- There has been a significant focus on improving pupils' learning and progress in the basics of reading, writing, comprehension and mathematics, to very good effect. This has not been at the expense of a broad and rich curriculum. Pupils have a range of extra-curricular activities to excite and stimulate their interest in learning and to enjoy school. 'Class novels', from a range of authors, provide an added stimulus to literacy lessons, the curriculum and to pupils' enjoyment of reading. Leaders have prioritised the broader curriculum this year, to make sure that assessment in all subjects is equally as strong as that in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Special 'theme weeks' enhance the curriculum and pupils' understanding of, and respect for, faiths and cultures different from their own. The recent 'we all live under one sky' week included a raft of visitors such as the Lions of Zululand, a Japanese-themed samurai and Indian dancers. High-quality written work and artwork capture the strong impact of such experiences.
- Together, outstanding teaching, the inviting curriculum and wide ranging extra-curricular activities ensure that pupils achieve well and thrive as they move through the school. Special community projects, careers fairs and projects with a local university contribute successfully to pupils' sense of community and raise their aspirations about what is possible in their future lives. Pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in education and to become active citizens in modern Britain today.
- Leaders' sharper focus on checking on pupils' achievement and regular discussions with staff ensure that no pupil is left behind in their learning. Extra activities, including small-group work, are quickly organised to help pupils catch up and move them on well. By the end of key stage 2, higher proportions of pupils and pupil groups are making strong progress compared with those found nationally.

- Governors have ensured that additional funding, such as pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils and the extra funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is spent well and makes a positive difference. There has been steady improvement in disadvantaged pupils' achievements in key stage 1. The progress that disadvantaged pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics is now well above that found nationally for all pupils by the end of key stage 2.
- Improved, careful and targeted support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has resulted in a significant improvement in their progress, attainment and attendance. Their attendance is above that of other pupils in school. Provisional key stage 2 assessment information indicates that progress this year has been stunning and well above that of other pupils nationally in 2016.
- The additional physical education and sport funding has been used well to enhance provision through the use of a local sports partnership and by extending the participation rates of pupils in a variety of different sports. Such work supplements the regular, and well-planned physical education lessons in school and the range of after-school clubs.

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective. Governors are astute and reflective. They strive to improve their own practice by auditing their own skills and implementing resulting action plans and through regular training. They have recruited governors with the right mix of skills and knowledge to carry out their varying roles. Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They visit regularly to monitor the school's work and to check on the impact of actions taken by leaders.
- Governors receive detailed, regular and highly evaluative reports from the headteacher on the impact of the school's work on pupils' progress, attendance and achievements across the school. Reports pull no punches and identify clearly things that are working well and what needs to improve, along with the actions staff are taking to tackle any identified weakness. Governors seek external validation of the school's work diligently, for example by examining the local authority improvement partner's reports and reports from external moderators for early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Governors have a good understanding of the strong arrangements for managing the performance of the headteacher, senior leaders and teachers. They check that any decisions on pay are linked closely to teachers' professional development targets and the national teachers' standards. Governors keep a very watchful eye on the health, safety and welfare of pupils and ensure that all resources are well spent and well deployed. They also make sure that key policies are up to date and available on the school's website.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders, governors and staff are trained well in how to keep pupils safe, including from risks of extremism, neglect, domestic violence and sexual exploitation. Safeguarding and safer recruitment policies are up to date and used consistently to inform practice. Leaders have a good understanding of risks to pupils' safety at school and in their communities. They ensure that pupils receive many opportunities to understand and manage these risks, particularly from social media and the internet.
- The learning mentor works closely with the designated safeguarding lead. Together, they quickly identify pupils at risk of harm or families who need early support before problems become overwhelming. Leaders work proactively with parents and external services, such as school nurses or children's social care, to secure the right support to help pupils and their families in times of need. Case files and records for pupils at risk or in need are detailed and thorough. They show the wide range of targeted work staff undertake to help tackle any barriers to pupils' learning and attendance, or their social or emotional development.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Lessons run like clockwork. From the moment they enter school in the morning, well-established routines and teachers' high expectations ensure that pupils from the earliest ages settle quickly to their learning.
- No time is wasted. Pupils relish their learning opportunities. Pupils are polite, respectful and eager to learn and listen attentively. They cannot wait to get on to their interesting tasks and work diligently and happily either on their own, in groups or in pairs.
- Leaders' focus on the development of reasoning and application of skills in mathematics has had a very positive impact on pupils' confidence, enjoyment of, and progress in the subject. Many pupils told inspectors that mathematics is their favourite subject. They particularly enjoy the daily 'mental maths' sessions. Regular training and support from the mathematics coordinator ensure that staff have the skills to teach the subject successfully.
- Leaders have developed and implemented a more systematic way to teach phonics, reading, writing and comprehension across the school. Staff and pupils have a very clear understanding of the approach and it has contributed to the strong improvements in pupils' reading and writing in all year groups. This, together with very regular reading activities and the creative use of the 'class novel,' have been pivotal in enticing pupils into reading for pleasure and for a purpose.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together seamlessly and make a strong team. They have a clear understanding of individual pupils and groups of pupils' needs and starting points. They also understand clearly what pupils need to do next to improve. This is because virtually all teachers assess pupils' learning regularly and use this information to plan activities that can move pupils on quickly from what they already know. In lower key stage 1, staff are not as adept at planning activities that move pupils on quickly from the skills they have acquired in Reception.

- Staff use questioning very successfully to check on pupils' understanding, and then challenge them to think about what they need to do next. This helps to develop pupils' independence, skills and confidence to 'have a go'. Staff intervene and guide sensitively when pupils need further help, either in class or in small additional intervention groups.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils thrive and grow into mature, respectful and thoughtful members of the school community. The atmosphere in classrooms and as you walk around the school is calm and joyful. This includes the positive ethos in the breakfast club that gives a healthy and friendly start to the school day.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They recognise that the strong security fences around the site are there to keep them safe and to 'keep trouble out'. Pupils also have a very clear understanding of the work that staff do to help them to understand how to keep safe in their local community. Pupils say that they trust adults in the school to help them in times of need. They particularly value the support from the learning mentor.
- The teaching of an understanding of cyber bullying and e-safety is regular and robust. Consequently, pupils have a very clear understanding of risks from social media and the internet and how to manage them. Pupils understand what bullying is and how to deal with it. This includes any type of prejudicial bullying or name-calling. Pupils are adamant that bullying is very rare because they are taught to respect and care for one another and because everyone 'gets along well'.
- Play times are well managed and 'buddies' keep an eye on anyone who might be feeling down. Pupils play and chat together harmoniously. Some pupils report that they would like more games and equipment to play with. The headteacher is working with staff to consider what else to provide to ensure that pupils continue to thoroughly enjoy their breaktimes.
- Careers fairs for Year 6 pupils and the 'Brilliant Club' run by a local university for Year 5 pupils contribute successfully to raising pupils' aspirations about what is possible in their future lives. The very carefully planned transitions into school, from class to class and into secondary school ensure that pupils are well prepared and supported for every step of their educational journey.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Their attitudes to learning, to each other, and to adults and visitors are exemplary. Pupils are delightful and proud ambassadors of their school.
- Pupils report that incidents of poor behaviour are very rare and would be sorted out straight away by the teacher. They have a very clear understanding of the school's rewards-based behaviour policy and report that teachers are consistent in applying it.

- Leaders record minor misdemeanours and more serious behaviour incidents meticulously in separate logs. Serious incidents of poor behaviour are few and far between. There were only two incidents recorded for the summer term in 2017. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Overall attendance rates have increased from below average to average in the last academic year. This is partly as a result of the high-profile, weekly celebration events where pupils love to see their attendance poppies in the hall 'flower' because of their improved attendance. It is also because of the engaging curriculum that excites and enthuses pupils and makes them want to come to school.
- Leaders now take swift action to support pupils who are at risk of not attending regularly. As a result, the rate of persistent absence has fallen by nearly two percentage points in the last year. The learning mentor works closely with families, supporting them to help their children to attend school. This includes occasionally collecting the pupils from their homes or securing support from other agencies when families are facing difficulties.
- Leaders recognised that the attendance of girls and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities lagged behind that of their peers in 2016. Earlier discussions with parents and more targeted support have helped to rectify this anomaly and close the gaps. Indeed, the current attendance rate of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is now well above the national average for primary schools. Despite leaders' best efforts, the attendance of some disadvantaged pupils is still not good enough. To tackle this, they have recruited an education welfare officer to work with the learning mentor and support families further.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- There has been, overall, a year-on-year improvement in outcomes of children and pupils across the school since the last inspection. The 2016 dip in pupils' achievements in reading, particularly for girls and disadvantaged pupils, has been robustly addressed. The progress of all pupils, and groups of pupils, is significantly above that found nationally in reading, writing, spelling and grammar, and mathematics.
- The attainment and progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have improved significantly. Provision for these pupils is carefully planned to meet individual needs. The special educational needs coordinator ensures that teachers and teaching assistants are fully equipped to support pupils in making accelerated progress and checks regularly that this is the case. In 2017, the progress made by Year 6 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was well above average for all pupils nationally, representing strong improvement on 2016.
- Observations of learning, and work in pupils' books from this year and last year, show that pupils thrive in their learning. Teachers' assessment information about how well pupils are doing corroborates these findings. The vast majority of pupils make very good progress from their varied starting points.

- Pupils' topic books from 2016 to 2017 show that pupils maintain the high-quality work and learning seen in their literacy and mathematics books, across other subjects. Pupils' careful application to learning, and their attention to presentation and handwriting, are evident in all lessons. Pupils learn, from early years onwards, how to present their work legibly and carefully. Their books are immaculate and show the very good progress they make from year to year and subject to subject. They also show that pupils work hard in lessons. Pupils are rightly proud of their efforts and the high-quality displays of their work that adorn the school walls.
- Improvements in the way that teachers check and record pupils' learning regularly have ensured that the most able pupils receive challenging activities to extend their thinking and to develop their skills further. Virtually all staff have high expectations for the most able pupils' achievement, and work set for them is usually at a deeper level of difficulty.
- Any pupil who is struggling with a concept or skill is able to access timely additional help. For example, pupils who were struggling with the concept of 'greater than' and 'smaller than' and using the right mathematical symbols, were supported effectively by an adult in a small group outside the classroom. They were keen to explain how these interesting, extra activities were helping them to gain a good understanding. Pupils explained clearly how they can now 'work the problems out' and were rightly proud of their achievements. This is typical of the kind of activities and the swift response to help pupils who need a bit of extra support.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Improvements in leadership, teaching, assessment and provision in recent years have led to an outstanding early years setting in which children flourish in the vibrant and stimulating areas. Children are very safe, enjoy school and achieve highly in all areas of their learning and development. The improvements mean that children now develop the skills, knowledge and personal qualities that stand them in excellent stead as they move through school.
- Children enter Nursery with a range of skills, knowledge and experiences. Some demonstrate skills and understanding that are typically expected for their age. However, a significant proportion start Nursery with skills below those expected, particularly relating to delays in speech and language development. Highly effective teaching and support ensure that any barriers to children's learning are tackled quickly.
- In 2017, all children made excellent progress from their different starting points across all areas of learning by the time they left Reception. The proportion reaching a good level of development was well above that found nationally. This includes disadvantaged children, and boys and girls. Achievement in the early years has improved from below average at the time of the previous inspection to above.
- The additional funding for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent judiciously. Children are well supported and benefit from individualised teaching programmes and focused support or activities, which help them to overcome difficulties and progress as well as their peers.

- Staff ensure that there is a wide range of enticing activities from which children can choose, both indoors and out. Children were seen delightedly taking off their socks and shoes and clambering into a sandpit demarcated by tree trunks. Such activities really whet their appetites for exciting adventures, teamwork and imaginative play.
- Staff are adept at developing children's language skills, independence and decision-making skills from the moment they enter school. Praise and encouragement and a real interest in what children have to say ensure that children become engrossed in the activities they choose for themselves and those that adults prepare for them.
- Staff make detailed, regular observations of children at work and play, to check on children's understanding across all areas of learning. They use this information meticulously to plan children's next steps, to ensure that they are successful in their learning. The focus on developing children's basic numeracy and literacy skills in an enticing and interesting way is evident across Nursery and Reception. This is securing high-quality work and high levels of competence and understanding.
- In recent years, leaders have prioritised increasing parental involvement and improving communication, to good effect. Partnerships between school and home are very effective. Parents speak highly of the detailed information that they receive about their children's learning. They value the new electronic system that enables them to see 'live' their children's accomplishments and enables parents to contribute from home. Parents are welcomed into the school and are encouraged to be actively engaged in supporting their children's learning, for example through reading and writing workshops, craft sessions and topic-led activities in school.
- Staff explore and extend children's communication and thinking skills in very interesting ways whenever opportunities arise. For example, in the campfire role-play area, when studying an insect, careful questioning by an adult led children to realise that it was not a spider because it only had six legs, not eight.
- Excellent relationships between staff and children are the bedrock from which children grow in confidence and self-esteem. Children settle in well and are keen to please. They adopt willingly the high expectations staff have of behaviour, attitudes and care for one another.
- Children's safety, welfare and well-being are of a high priority. All staff are well trained in policies and procedures. Practice is consistently strong.

School details

Unique reference number	114207
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10036464

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	447
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joanne Smithson
Headteacher	Paula O'Rourke
Telephone number	01325 300334
Website	www.sugarhill.durham.sch.uk
Email address	sugarhill@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	16–17 May 2013

Information about this school

- Sugar Hill Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. There is one Nursery class and two Reception classes. Staff in the school run a breakfast club daily.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who require school support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

- A new headteacher and chair of the governing body have been appointed since the last inspection. An extended leadership team was developed in September 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the school. They visited a number of lessons jointly with senior leaders. They reviewed pupils' workbooks during lessons and also heard a number of pupils read. Pupils' English, mathematics and topic workbooks from the academic year 2016/17 were also examined.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a group of staff and three representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. A meeting was also held with the school's education development partner from Durham County Council.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils in lessons and around the school over the two days of the inspection. They also spoke formally to a group of pupils from key stage 1 and a group from key stage 2.
- Inspectors took account of the views of the 24 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the written text comments made by nine parents. The lead inspector spoke to the parent of a previous pupil on the telephone.
- A range of documents was reviewed. These included key safeguarding documents, the school's written evaluation of its work and improvement plans. In addition, reports to the governing body and provisional assessment information from pupils' 2017 summer assessments were studied. Inspectors also checked leaders' assessment information on the progress pupils and different groups of pupils made from 2016 to 2017 across the school.

Inspection team

Margaret Farrow, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Nugent	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Norton Foulger	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Ashcroft	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Foster	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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