

Highfield Community Primary School

Fordfield Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR4 0DA

Inspection dates 25–26 April 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The rate of progress that pupils make has increased significantly, especially in mathematics.
- The gap between the achievement of those who are known to be eligible for pupil-premium funding and other pupils has been reduced significantly by the time they leave Key Stage 2.
- Pupils in the specialist language unit make good progress because of the opportunities they get to receive help.
- Teaching is good because lessons are well planned and the work pupils are given is well suited to their abilities and is demanding.
- Pupils know what targets they are trying to achieve in lessons, which helps them to improve their work.
- The vast majority of pupils behave very well in the classroom and when moving around the school. Pupils say they feel very safe.
- The headteacher has been an important factor in improving the school: pupils progress at a faster rate and teaching is now good. He has helped to develop a good leadership team so that the school is well placed to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough lessons were seen which were judged to be outstanding.
- Pupils' writing skills are lower than those in reading or mathematics.
- Too much time is spent in some lessons by teachers on their introductions, leaving little time for pupils to demonstrate what they can do.
- Pupils are not given enough time to respond to teachers' written comments in their books so that they can learn from their mistakes.
- The overall attendance of pupils is low.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day’s notice.
- Inspectors visited 30 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 16 different teachers.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about how much reading they do as well as looking at their work in class.
- Discussions took place with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Documents were examined, including those relating to safeguarding, the school’s improvement plan, and records of its checks on teaching and learning, as well as the school’s own assessment data.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parents View) to gain an overview of parents’ views. The views of 25 parents who were spoken to before school were taken into account.
- Thirty staff also completed questionnaires about their views of the school.

Inspection team

Frank Cain, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Hargreaves

Additional Inspector

Anne Humble

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Highfield is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of service families, and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average, but the proportion at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is below average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- There is a specialist resource base in the school for pupils who have difficulties with speech and language. Pupils from across Sunderland access the unit from Monday to Thursday, returning to their local school on Friday.
- There is a separate, private, day-care centre attached to the school. This will have its own inspection report at a later date.
- Government' floor standards, which relate to pupils' attainment and progress, have been met in 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning so that a greater proportion is outstanding by:
 - giving more opportunity for pupils to work on their own by shortening the time teachers spend introducing the lesson to the whole class
 - improving pupils' writing skills across all subject areas
 - giving pupils time during lessons to respond to the teachers' suggestions on how their work might be improved further.
- Seeking more ways to support and convince some parents of the benefits of good attendance at school, so that the school reaches at least the level of attendance found nationally.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When children enter the school they have skills which are well below those typically expected, but by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 their attainment is close to the national average. They make good progress, particularly in mathematics, which is a very popular subject amongst the pupils. Progress is good in reading but slower in writing where standards are slightly lower.
- This good progress is supported by inspectors' observations of pupils in class, as well as a detailed scrutiny of their work in books. Strengths are very evident in mathematics. One child in Reception proudly counted up to 20 and was then able to do the more difficult task of counting back down again to one. In Year 3, pupils moved swiftly from working with two numbers to three in a very short period of time.
- The school tackles discrimination well. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do as well as other pupils, because of the good support they are given in lessons.
- The school also nurtures high-performing pupils. For example, a child in Reception accesses Year 1 work in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals do less well than other pupils in Key Stage 1, but do far better in Key Stage 2. Here, their attainment and the amount of progress that they make are slightly better than other pupils, showing that the school has successfully closed the gap in their performance compared to other pupils.
- The specialist language resource unit offers good support for the needs of its pupils. They make good progress and work well, identifying foods that were good for them and those which were not.
- Reading is encouraged and pupils achieve well. One parent commented that his child never had a book out of her hands. New reading schemes have been introduced which encourage pupils to read widely. Attainment in writing is not as high as other subjects because pupils do not get enough opportunity to write in a wide range of different situations.
- The Year 1 pupils scored very well in the test which measured how well pupils were learning the sounds that letters make, because of the high priority given to reading and because children are introduced to looking at difficult words such as 'hairclip' and 'funfair' in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The quality of teaching is good

- Lessons are consistently well planned. The tasks given to pupils are well matched to their different abilities so that all pupils are able to make good progress. Work is often very demanding to make pupils think hard, and they respond well to the challenge.
- In the best lessons, pupils are given practical problems to answer. In a Year 1 English class, the teacher used photographs of the foundations of houses being built next to the school to answer the question, 'What stops houses sinking into the ground or falling over?'
- In a Year 6 geography lesson pupils were able to share and explain what they had learnt in earlier lessons very effectively. Their subject knowledge on mountainous areas, such as the tourism involved and the resulting employment was outstanding.
- Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop children's curiosity and encourage them to explore, for example, when testing out what sticks to a magnet.
- Good group and paired work help pupils to develop good communication skills, for example, in a good French lesson, about the different planets in the solar system where they confidently sang out their names.
- Teaching assistants play a significant role in the learning and good progress that pupils make in the school, because they give clues to help them, rather than simply telling them what the answers are.

- Older pupils are aware of what level they are working at and all have specific targets to meet. Pupils say that having targets helps them to work harder. The school sets very challenging targets to encourage pupils to improve their work, starting with children in Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The marking of pupils' work by teachers is good and pupils are given information on how they might improve further, but teachers need to give more time for them to carry out those improvements before moving on to new work.
- In a few lessons, there was too much time spent by the teacher in their introduction so that there was not enough time left for pupils to demonstrate what they could achieve on their own.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Almost all pupils behave extremely well in class and around the school and examples of serious behavioural incidents have fallen dramatically.
- Many pupils declared that behaviour in the school is generally, 'really good' and that there was very good back up if there were problems in 'The Place 2 Be' (a room to go to if they had a problem) and its clinical mental-health counsellor. Many pupils commented on how safe this made them feel, and the school rock band have written, and performed, a song in its praise.
- Pupils from an early age watch, listen and follow instructions well. They are considerate towards their peers and some Year 6 pupils help in after school activities, including netball, dance and football.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and interested in visitors who come to the school. They are respectful to all staff as well as temporary teachers and their sport coaches.
- During an assembly, when pupils shared with others how well they were progressing in their learning, the behaviour was exemplary. Pupils listened attentively and applauded politely to the contribution made by other pupils.
- Pupils' attitude to learning is good and many said that they liked school because teachers tell them how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. Only very occasionally did pupils show a lack of attention in class.
- Pupils are proud of their school and their school-work. The school has excellent procedures to support pupils who are in danger of being excluded.
- Parents did not express any concern about poor behaviour and they were full of praise for how well their children are looked after and supported. Many also said that the school had also helped them.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and parents agreed with this and said there is no bullying here.
- Although the vast majority of pupils attend regularly and on time, attendance is low mainly due to a small group of pupils whose parents have not been convinced about the importance of good attendance. The school works very hard to make improvements.

The leadership and management are good

- The leadership of teaching and learning is good because of the improvements that have been made in pupils' achievement and behaviour, as well as in teaching and learning since the previous report. Leaders have begun to tackle weaknesses in writing using visits and visitors to stimulate good descriptive writing.
- The headteacher has effectively delegated the responsibility for tracking pupils' achievement to class teachers and supported them with professional development that, as school records show, has improved teaching significantly.
- Teachers and their performance-management targets are linked to pupil performance in literacy and numeracy so that the school is improving because teaching is more focussed on how well

pupils are doing.

- Staff morale is high and their support for how well the school is performing is overwhelming.
 - Parents are very happy with the school and they are encouraged to take an active part in their children's learning through their children's learning journals and events such as 'Easter Stay and Play'. Very large numbers of parents attend school performances and family learning sessions are very popular.
 - The curriculum is good and topics such as mountains are used within mathematics lessons to capture pupils' interest. Music has a very high priority in the school and many pupils play instruments and some use computers to mix music and create compact disks, all of which help pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning.
 - The school enhances the curriculum by bringing in coaches and experts to enhance the curriculum for French and dance lessons, for example.
 - The school has close productive links to the attached day-care centre and they share some outdoor facilities with them.
 - The local authority were highly praised across the school, by teachers, senior staff and governors for the support that they have given to review how pupils' work is monitored and in improving teaching and learning.
 - All statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are met.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very committed to the school and offer the right amount of challenge and support. They understand the importance of using data on pupils' progress. Governors use this information to measure the performance of the school and are planning to increase their understanding even further with local authority support. They know about the quality of teaching and check on links between pay and performance in the classroom. They are fully aware of the impact that is being made by the extra funding from the pupil premium.
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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	134644
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	406564

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	439
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Nichol
Headteacher	Simon Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	2 March 2011
Telephone number	0191 5537655
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