

Inspection of a good school: Nettlesworth Primary School

Front Street, Nettlesworth, Chester-le-Street, County Durham DH2 3PF

Inspection date: 4 July 2023

Outcome

Nettlesworth Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy school. Welcoming smiles from exceptionally caring staff greet pupils at the start of each day. This makes pupils feel safe, settled and ready to learn. Classrooms and corridors are vibrantly displayed, reflecting the rich experiences on offer to pupils.

Leaders set high expectations for all pupils. They want them to succeed personally, socially and academically. They do all they can to make sure this happens. Pupils value the support they receive from their teachers.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils focus on their learning. They respond politely and courteously to questions and instruction. Movement around the school is orderly. Pupils routinely hold doors open for each other. They are respectful and demonstrate excellent manners.

Playtime is harmonious. Older pupils support younger pupils in their play. They organise games and activities to engage in.

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

Leaders have chosen a curriculum that meets the scope and ambition of the national curriculum. They use a range of resources to support its delivery. The essential subject-specific knowledge that pupils must learn is mapped out step by step. End points are clearly defined to ensure pupils make good progress.

Leaders are determined that all pupils will learn to read fluently. They encourage pupils to read for pleasure both at home and school. A rich supply of books, from well-stocked class libraries, engages pupils' interests. Older pupils talk about the books they have read with confidence and enthusiasm.

A new approach to the teaching of phonics has strengthened early reading in school. Children in Reception get off to a good start in acquiring a secure knowledge of letter sounds. This continues into Year 1. Regular training and support ensure phonics lessons are consistently delivered and follow expectations. Pupils practise reading with books that are well matched to their phonics knowledge. This improves their reading confidence. Pupils in need of catch-up receive the extra practice and support they need.

The teaching of wider reading is more variable. A scrutiny of books shows that pupils study all aspects of reading comprehension. However, there is variability in how frequently these are revisited. This impacts on pupils' ability to extend their thinking. Some pupils' responses lack the depth of understanding of which they are capable. For example, older pupils can use their inference skills to locate the correct information. However, their answers can lack the explanation needed to show deeper thinking.

In mathematics, there is a heavy focus on developing pupils' mathematical fluency. This helps pupils become secure in their calculations. Pupils are less secure in their knowledge of mathematical reasoning and problem-solving. Although planned for, teachers often use such activities as an extension to learning. This can limit the time spent on developing these skills.

Pupils secure their knowledge of scientific concepts. They enjoy their lessons and are keen to talk about what they have learned. Pupils have fewer opportunities to show how they can work scientifically. Leaders recognise that this aspect of the science curriculum needs strengthening.

Leaders have mapped out a plan to check what pupils know and can do in all subjects. Some checks are well considered. They are useful in helping teachers to plan the right next steps for pupils. Early reading assessments are particularly helpful in doing this. In contrast, other checks are not sufficiently connected to the taught curriculum. This makes them less effective for teachers. For example, teachers spend time capturing pupils' reading ages. This does not inform teachers well enough of the impact of the taught curriculum.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. They ensure that pupils' learning is enriched with a wide range of experiences. A raft of after-school clubs is available for pupils most evenings. Pupils participate in a range of whole-school projects and awards. These include Rights Respecting School, Fairtrade and Eco School awards. This enables pupils to explore their interests. It increases their awareness of the world around them.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the life of the school. Their needs are identified quickly. Leaders do all they can to ensure they receive the right support and intervention. Staff make curriculum adaptations so they can learn alongside their peers.

Staff are happy working at the school. They feel well supported by leaders. It is commonplace for staff to do random acts of kindness to help each other. Most parents are highly complementary of the support they receive from school staff.

Governors know the school well. They are proud of the school's many achievements. They offer a wide variety of skills, which they use effectively in order to support leaders in their work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding established at the school. Leaders know their pupils well. This means they are alert to the smallest changes in their behaviour. They are swift to seek the support and advice of other agencies. Record-keeping is meticulous, and the chronology of actions taken is detailed.

Recruitment checks are undertaken on anyone working at the school. Induction procedures for new staff are thorough. Regular training and updates maintain staff awareness of the local safeguarding concerns.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. The curriculum is fluid and responsive to emerging safeguarding issues. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school. They are confident they have a trusted adult who they can turn to for support when they need it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Opportunities to extend pupils' thinking or deepen pupils' understanding can be variable. This can limit pupils' depth of learning. Subject leaders need to strengthen this aspect of curriculum planning so that more pupils receive increasing opportunities to extend their thinking and gain a deeper understanding of the subjects they study.
- Sometimes, assessment approaches do not focus on checking how well pupils understand knowledge from the taught curriculum. This means that opportunities to extend and consolidate pupils' learning can be missed. Leaders need to ensure that assessments focus on how well pupils have secured their subject-specific knowledge and skills from the taught curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2014.

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](#)' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	114005
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10290015
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Aaron O’Roarty
Headteacher	Donna Lee
Website	www.nettlesworth.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school offers breakfast-club provision.

Information about this inspection

- This is the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector reviewed documents on the school’s website, as well as published information about the school’s performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, wider reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, listened to a sample of pupils read and looked at samples of pupils’ work.

- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, inspectors met with the designated safeguarding officer and scrutinised relevant policies and procedures.
- Inspectors met with the five members of the governing body.
- A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school was observed and behaviour logs and incidents were reviewed.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their understanding of behaviour and how to keep themselves safe.

Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alison Cottrell

Ofsted Inspector

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