

Inspection of a good school: Simonside Primary School

Bedeburn Road, Westerhope, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE5 4LG

Inspection dates: 22–23 January 2020

Outcome

Simonside Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to belong to this happy and inclusive school. They play and work well together. Pupils socialise in breakfast club, where healthy food choices are available.

Leaders, staff and governors have high expectations for all pupils. Pupils take great pride in working hard. One pupil said, 'We learn more and get better at things because we practise, practise, practise.' Teachers are ambitious for what they expect pupils to achieve. Pupils aim high and are proud when they succeed. Pupils are ambitious in their future aspirations. Their career choices include working as a doctor, a teacher, a vet or a footballer.

Pupils relish their roles as school councillors or attendance ambassadors. Those with responsibilities are positive role models for their peers. Pupils understand how democracy works. They elect a 'prime minister' each year based on the strength of the candidate's manifesto.

Pupils recognise the signs of bullying and say it is rare. They say that staff tackle any unacceptable behaviour straight away. Pupils trust that staff would deal with any bullying issue in the same way. The majority of parents who gave their views during the inspection praise the school.

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

Leaders have maintained the good quality of education since the previous inspection. Leaders' curriculum plans identify what pupils will learn in every subject. They include the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils will learn each year. Teachers deliver these plans in a logical order. They check how well pupils are learning and revisit learning on a regular basis. Any follow-up learning builds on what pupils know and can do.

Leaders prioritise the teaching of reading and inspiring pupils to read. This includes developing phonic knowledge and skills. Leaders have structured the teaching of phonics well across early years and key stage 1. Staff access regular training which develops their expertise. Pupils read books which match the sounds and letters that they know. This helps pupils to be confident when they read. In 2019, phonic outcomes at the end of Year 1 declined to be below average. Leaders wasted no time in tackling this issue. In 2019, a higher proportion of pupils entered Year 1 with the reading skills expected for their age. Leaders know that some pupils still need to catch up to where they should be by the end of Year 1.

Leadership and teaching of mathematics are strengths of the school. Teachers and teaching assistants have secure subject knowledge. Pupils are able to use specific mathematical terminology. This is because adults teach this well. This starts in early years. Pupils apply the skills they learn when they solve mathematical problems. Pupils make good progress in mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

Leaders sequence the history curriculum well across each year group. Pupils discuss, and compare, a range of historical sources. They can explain how events and people in the past have shaped the way people live in the present. Educational visits bring learning to life. For example, a trip to Hadrian's Wall helped pupils to know more, and understand more, about Roman times. Pupils in Year 6 made wider connections when learning about the Victorian era. They compared the rights of children then and now when considering child labour.

Pupils attend a range of extra-curricular activities. These are available at lunchtime and after school. This supports their personal development. Parents appreciate this offer. They say it helps their children flourish.

Adults support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. The leader of SEND provides clear direction for the management of pupils' needs. By the end of key stages 1 and 2, pupils make strong progress in English and mathematics.

The proportion of pupils who miss days at school is too high. This includes pupils who are absent on a regular basis. These pupils are missing parts of the curriculum and could be learning even more. Leaders have worked with families to improve the attendance of many pupils. The attendance officer takes a firm stance, including issuing fines. Leaders have further work to do to improve attendance rates for pupils.

Staff morale is high. They are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the strong teamwork that exists between all members of staff. They work well together in the interests of the pupils. They feel valued and supported by leaders, including when considering workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff understand their role in keeping children safe. Staff access regular training, so their knowledge is up to date. Staff are clear on how they identify and record any concerns. All record-keeping is thorough and appropriate.

The curriculum provides ways for pupils to learn how to stay safe. This includes learning about online safety. Parents agree with their children that school is a safe place.

Leaders have effective systems in place to check that absent pupils are safe. The parent support adviser provides high-quality support for families in challenging circumstances.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders ensure that all pupils access a detailed phonics programme. In 2019, outcomes in phonics at the end of Year 1 declined. The proportion of pupils entering Year 2 at the expected standard in phonics was below average. Leaders' actions to ensure that pupils catch up quickly are starting to make a difference. Leaders need to fully embed the systems in place to support the lowest attainers so that even more pupils are at the expected reading age when they enter Year 2.
- Leaders have prioritised tackling pupils' attendance rates, which are below average. They have had some success, particularly in improving persistent absenteeism. Nonetheless, the proportion of overall absences and persistent absences remain too high. As a result, too many pupils are missing out on their education. Leaders should continue with their work to reduce this further, so that the attendance rate is at least in line with the national average.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 26–27 April 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	108454
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10110835
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lynn Rae
Headteacher	Louise Thompson
Website	http://www.simonside.newcastle.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 April 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Outer West Learning Trust (OWLT), along with eight other local primary schools: Throckley Primary School, Milecastle Primary School, Lemington Riverside Primary School, Newburn Manor Primary School, West Denton Primary School, Westerhope Primary School, Knop Law Primary School and Waverley Primary School. The aims of the trust can be found on the trust's website: www.outerwestlearningtrust.co.uk/.
- The deputy headteacher was promoted to her role in September 2019.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders, early years leader, leader of SEND, teachers and support staff. I met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- I met with the achievement partner and head of school effectiveness from the local authority.
- I looked in particular detail at early reading and phonics, mathematics and history. I visited lessons in these subjects, with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. I met with pupils and staff. I listened to pupils read and, with leaders, viewed examples of pupils' work in books.

- I scrutinised a range of documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, school improvement plan, curriculum plans, reports from the local authority and minutes of the full governing body meetings.
- I reviewed safeguarding records, including the single central record of recruitment checks. I met with senior leaders about safeguarding and talked to staff about their role in keeping children safe. I discussed with pupils what it was like to be a pupil in this school.
- I considered 10 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, including eight free-text responses. I considered six responses to Ofsted’s online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted’s online pupil survey, but I gathered the views of pupils during the inspection.

Inspection team

Alison Aitchison, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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