

Stephenson Way Community Primary School

Stephenson Way, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 7DD

Inspection dates 30 April 2014–1 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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 achievement of pupils in all key stages and by all groups is good.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6 they attain broadly average standards. This represents good progress from their starting points.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because they are well supported and work is carefully planned to meet their needs. This demonstrates the school's strong and successful commitment to ensure equality of opportunity.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe at school. They are keen to do well and are respectful of each other. This allows good learning to take place in the classroom.
- The good quality of teaching is having a clear impact on improving progress.
- The headteacher's inspirational leadership provides clear direction and focus, creating a positive learning environment in which pupils can succeed.
- The school is improving quickly because leaders and the Academy Trust have high aspirations and an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Pupils' progress and attainment have improved rapidly over the past two years.
- Governors are knowledgeable and provide excellent support and challenge, which contribute well to promoting school improvement.
- Parents are extremely supportive of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of pupils attaining above-average standards is not yet consistently high enough.
- Some teaching does not challenge pupils well enough, particularly the most able.
- Attendance is adversely affected by a small proportion of persistent non-attenders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons, two of them jointly with the headteacher and the executive headteacher of the academy trust. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to observe pupils learning in individual and small group sessions. Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 assemblies were also observed.
- Inspectors heard pupils from Year 4 and Year 6 read, examined the work in pupils' books, and observed pupils' activities in the dining hall and playground.
- Inspectors held discussions with a number of parents, the headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and members of the governing body. They also met with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the academy trust.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils in lessons and around the school, as well as having two more-formal meetings with groups of pupils from Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation, including minutes of governing body meetings, a summary of the school's view of its performance, the school improvement plan, and documents showing how the quality of teaching is checked. Inspectors also scrutinised internal and external pupils' progress data, teachers' plans and records relating to safeguarding, child-protection, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 16 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's parent survey, an emailed letter from a parent and 31 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Peter Bailey, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jonathan Chicken	Additional Inspector
Pauline Hilling- Smith	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well-above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special education needs who are supported through school action is well-above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is also well-above average.
- Pupils are taught in 14 classes. The Early Years Foundation Stage has one Nursery and two Reception classes. There is one mixed-age class in Key Stage 2
- A high number of new children have joined the school this year.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club which is managed by the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school became an academy in December 2012 and is part of the Tudhoe Learning Trust.
- Since the school became an academy a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have joined the school.
- The school currently has healthy school status and has achieved the Silver Sports Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate progress in all subjects and thus raise attainment by:
 - increasing the level of challenge for the most able
 - further promoting the potential of subject and phase leaders in leading developments which promote higher levels of pupil achievement
 - providing a wider range of enrichment activities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development more effectively.
- Further improve the rates of attendance of those pupils who do not attend school regularly by building on the existing good practice and working more closely with families so that they have a clearer understanding of the importance of attendance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The vast majority of children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development that are generally well below those expected for their age, especially in personal and social skills and those relating to communication, language and literacy. In the safe, caring and happy area, children settle quickly and, by the end of the Reception, all groups of children make good progress from their low starting points and generally enter Key Stage 1 with a level of development below that which is typical for their age.
- Attainment in Key Stage 1 and predicted pupil outcomes show a strong improvement, nearly all make good progress, with many making better than expected progress, especially in reading. Although standards are slightly below national expectations, there is evidence of rapid improvement over a two-year period.
- Pupils' phonics skills (linking letters and the sounds they make) develop quickly and pupils are able to apply these skills to help them read. Pupils read widely and often. Reading has a high profile in the school and a good range of resources support this. Pupils express an enjoyment in reading and Year 6 pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and the books they prefer.
- Pupils make good progress overall across Key Stage 2 and reach broadly average attainment by the end of year 6. The most able pupils, however, do not always do as well as they could and an insufficient proportion of pupils reach above-average standards. Work in books, supported by detailed and rigorous school tracking data shows that the good progress of pupils in Year 6 is reflected in all the years and groups across the school.
- The wise use of pupil premium funding, to provide individual support, including in reading, is very successful in raising the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The gaps between their attainment and the attainment of others in the school are closing and school data indicates that they are, on average, a term behind in mathematics and writing, and two behind in reading.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress, particularly in reading, because of the impressive support they receive from highly skilled teaching assistants both within and outside the classroom. Three parents made special mention of the high quality of care and provision for pupils with learning difficulties.
- Effective support is given to an increasing number of pupils who join part way through Key Stages 1 or 2, so that they settle quickly and make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching in the school is good. It is having a marked impact on improving the rate of pupils' progress.
- Teaching is generally strongest in English and mathematics and has been improved through a programme of intensive staff training and support. This has resulted in an increasing proportion of teaching being identified as being good or better.
- The school has prioritised the teaching of basic skills, in order to raise standards. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy their learning because the teaching is of a consistently good quality and provides children with a wide range of stimulating activities both in the classroom and outdoors. Teachers have high expectations and have developed strong relationships with their pupils, which contributes to the good learning in the classroom. Pupils are keen and willing learners.
- The quality of teaching has been improved by a programme of intensive staff training and support, which is valued by teachers. Links with other schools in the academy trust has promoted the sharing of good practice.

- Work in pupils' books is extremely well presented. Individual target cards in English and mathematics accurately record pupils' learning. High-quality marking tells pupils how they can improve their work. Pupils respond well to the advice given.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and ask searching questions which require pupils to explain their answers fully. In a Year 6 reading group, for example, probing questioning extended learning and enabled pupils to give detailed and high-quality answers from the text.
- However, in some lessons, the work set does not always provide challenge and sufficiently stretch the most able pupils and allow them to apply their range of skills or deepen their thinking and knowledge.
- Teaching assistants are highly effective and make a positive contribution to support the learning of all pupils, especially those who may need a little extra help. This effective support builds up pupils' confidence and enhances their basic skills so that they play a full part in the lesson and make good progress. In a Year 4 class, for example, a teaching assistant skilfully supported a pupil with particular special educational needs in a creative writing lesson, enabling the pupil to be fully involved in the lesson and achieve well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- There has been a considerable transformation in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning over the past year, helping them to make consistently good progress in lessons. Pupils are also polite, well-mannered and show respect for each other and for adults.
- Pupils, staff and parents are unanimous in their view that attitudes to school, conduct and behaviour have improved significantly.
- The new leadership team prioritised improving behaviour, revising the behaviour-management policy and providing staff training to ensure consistency. The work has been massively impressive with an impact on all areas of school. Pupils speak positively about the new behaviour policy. It is well understood, valued and consistently applied by staff.
- The school now thoroughly records incidents of poor behaviour, and a team of staff, led by the deputy headteacher and including the home-school liaison officer, regularly check the behaviour and incident logs and plan appropriate interventions. Well developed support is in place for pupils who experience social or emotional difficulties. The impact of these actions is evidenced by the significant reduction in the number of incidents recorded, and exclusions have halved in the last 12 months.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The large site and entry to the school are secure.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. They have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying, and say there is very little bullying in school. When it does occur they have the confidence in the staff to deal with it quickly. They have a good understanding of risk, supported well by the school's emphasis on personal and internet safety. Pupils have a good understanding of different kinds of bullying, including cyber bullying, racist and homophobic bullying, which they believe does not happen.
- All parents who responded to Parent View believe their children are safe, happy and well looked after.
- Concerted action taken by school leaders and the home-school liaison worker has resulted in a marked improvement in attendance rates, which are now broadly average. Inspectors observed two assemblies which reinforced the benefits of good attendance effectively and presented the monthly class attendance awards. Persistent absence has also reduced, but remains higher than the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- The inspirational headteacher provides the school with dynamic leadership. He is extremely committed and passionate in engendering a consistently positive approach to driving forward improvement. His approach is infectious and sets the tone for the whole school. At its roots is the headteacher's unwavering determination to provide every child with a solid foundation for the future. Teamwork across the school is strong in pursuit of the headteacher's fundamental beliefs.
- The leadership is held in high regard by the pupils, parents and staff. Staff express a high level of confidence in the leadership. Staff morale is high. One member of staff commented, 'We are all working so hard to be an outstanding school.'
- The leadership has an accurate understanding of how well the school is doing: leaders thoroughly evaluate school performance. Leaders correctly identify the school's strengths and the right priorities for further development. As a result the school continues to make rapid progress in improving achievement, behaviour, enjoyment of learning and attendance.
- Middle leadership is working well but the school recognises that the full potential of subject and phase coordinators to promote higher levels of achievement is not yet fully developed.
- Performance management is used robustly to hold all teachers to account for the achievement of pupils. Targets are clear and rooted in the National Teaching Standards and also pupils' progress. The academy has focused on improving pupils' basic skills to tackle deficits in their learning and offered a wider range of subjects through a Foundation curriculum, which meets pupils' needs.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum are developing and have a strong impact on pupils' relationships with each other. Observed assemblies celebrated achievement, but there are not enough enrichment activities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development even more effectively.
- The school is using the additional primary sports funding successfully to improve the quality of physical education in school. Specialist sports coaches and teachers run activities, take lessons and train staff. This has broadened the range of sporting activities and is having a positive effect on pupils' physical well-being and lifestyles.
- The academy trust is highly effective in holding leaders to account and providing additional expertise to drive improvement. The executive headteacher of the Trust demonstrates a high level of commitment to the school and actively promotes the school's progress through providing well-focused support and challenge.
- The academy trust has enabled staff to gain valuable knowledge and experience through working with their counterparts in the other schools within the Trust and sharing good practice.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They speak extremely positively of the staff, saying that they are approachable and know individual pupils well. A letter from a parent included the words, 'I am blown away by the time and effort given by all staff. The massive change in my child, in a relatively short time, speaks volumes.'
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and are managed effectively. The knowledge and skills of staff are kept up to date through regular and rigorous training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide strong support for the work of the school. Their energy and insight contribute positively to its strategic drive for improvement. They make decisions based on a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Their monitoring role, coupled with the comprehensive training they have undertaken, means that governors have a good knowledge of the school's performance and quality of teaching. This allows them to hold the school robustly to account for its improvement and to ensure that pay progression is closely linked to teachers' performance. They also monitor the school's deployment of its resources. As a result they make well-informed decisions about the use of pupil premium funding and the primary school sports funding and their impact on pupils' achievement.

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	138556
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	440099

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	365
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Simpson
Headteacher	Tim Cassap
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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