

Portobello Primary School

Tamerton Drive, Birtley, Chester le Street, County Durham, DH3 2LY

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2014

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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. This is because pupils genuinely take responsibility for their own actions. They work and play together harmoniously and older pupils delight in their roles to help and support younger children.
- Pupils feel very safe. They are happy and quite adamant that any kind of bullying is very rare. Parents say that the staff care for their children very well and any concerns they may have are rapidly addressed.
- Pupils make good progress to achieve standards which are high in reading and above average in mathematics by the time they leave Year 6.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they use this to provide a curriculum which is exciting and creative. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and strive to achieve and please their teachers.
- Leaders and governors work closely together and understand well the strengths of the school and its weaknesses. They identify how the school can improve further and work closely, and successfully, with teachers to achieve this.
- Improvements to the quality of teaching have been very effective. Well-focused training for staff has led to better progress and rising standards for pupils, especially for older pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment in writing is lower than that in reading and mathematics, especially for boys.
- Not all teachers plan writing tasks which inspire pupils to take a real pride in the quality and content of their written work.
- Ways for pupils to improve the quality of their writing in English, and in other subjects, are not always clearly explained.
- Teaching is good rather than outstanding. Pupils are not always challenged well enough to achieve their best.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils about how well they are achieving in their work does not always give them clear enough information on how to progress further.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 10 lessons over the two days. In addition, they made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils reading. The acting headteacher took part in a joint observation with an inspector.
- Separate discussions were held with the acting headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The opinions of 15 members of staff were also considered from their questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at children's learning journals, staff planning journals, data on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation and information relating to the welfare of pupils' and safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils during morning playtime and lunchtime, and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors took account of the 56 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.

Inspection team

Kate Pringle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

John Pattinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those children in local authority care, or for children of service families, is average.
- The vast majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- At the time of inspection, the headteacher was on a phased return to work after a long absence. The deputy headteacher has been acting headteacher during the headteacher's absence.
- Since September, there have been a number of changes to senior and middle leaders' roles and responsibilities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing, especially for boys, by:
 - sharing the most inspiring teaching of writing that already takes place in the school
 - making sure that teachers in all subjects always make clear to pupils the features of good writing that they should include in their work.
- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good, and increase the amount of outstanding teaching, by making sure that teachers:
 - plan tasks for pupils which take account of what they can do and closely match learning to abilities and needs
 - give feedback to pupils which tells them how to improve their work further and what they need to do to achieve this.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the Reception class with skills slightly below those typical for their age. When they move onto Year 1, their skills are largely in line with the national average. The present Reception class has settled in well. The children show great independence in learning and are making good progress.
- Children make good progress when learning letters and the sounds they make (phonics), achieving levels which were above average in the Year 1 national phonics test. This achievement is making a significant difference to the quality of pupils' reading.
- Older pupils who 'missed' this aspect of learning and were unable to break words into smaller sections and sound them out, have been quickly identified and given specific teaching which is helping them to enjoy reading independently.
- Reading has rapidly become a strength of the school and pupils now leave Year 6 with levels in reading which are considerably above those expected for their age.
- By the end of Year 2, standards have improved. The vast majority of pupils now achieve above average levels in reading and mathematics. Girls also do well in writing but writing levels at the end of Year 2 are average overall because boys' attainment is well below that of girls.
- Since the last inspection, standards at the Key Stage 2 have improved. Standards of attainment in reading and mathematics are well above national levels and these look to be maintained in the current Year 6. Pupils' writing does not show similar gains and attainment levels are broadly average with girls doing better than boys.
- Pupils' achievement is good from their individual starting points. Overall, pupils make good, and often better, progress in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing is not as rapid because although most pupils make expected progress, fewer make better than expected progress.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals make good progress in line with other pupils in the school. When they leave Year 6, there is little difference between the attainment of these pupils to that of their peers.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress in line with other pupils. Carefully tailored learning activities and small group work mean that these pupils receive support which is skilled and wholly appropriate to their needs.
- The proportion of the most able pupils gaining higher levels has increased since the last inspection. Present indications are that more pupils are expected to gain Level 3 in Year 2 and Level 5 in Year 6. As in previous years, a small proportion of pupils are anticipated to gain Level 6 in mathematics.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Pupils settle quickly into lessons and always work hard, trying their best. They respond very well to teachers and have excellent attitudes to learning.
- Children in the Reception class are confident and inquisitive learners because of the motivating activities teachers plan for them. They consider problems carefully, as when balancing Elmer the elephant, discussing what would be needed to balance his weight and whether objects are lighter or heavier than each other.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and pupils benefit from specialist teaching in several subjects, including music, art and physical education (PE).
- Many teachers prepare learning activities which include a range of interesting tasks to engage pupils' interest and harness their will to succeed. This was clearly evident when Year 5 pupils were asked to describe the characters in a story. Using a video clip as a starting point, pupils considered a range of vocabulary and phrases in response to pertinent questioning by the

teacher. As pupils shared their ideas and evaluated the quality of their work, they challenged each other to improve the quality of their writing.

- In most lessons, work is matched carefully to the needs of pupils. Teachers use the information they have about the levels at which pupils are working to set tasks which enable them to make good progress. When tasks address the different abilities of pupils less well, progress is slower.
- This is more evident in pupils' writing activities where there is not enough expectation for pupils to improve the quality of their writing. Pupils are very clear about what they have to get done in the lesson, but they are not so clear about what they have to include in their writing to improve it.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to write across other subjects and for older pupils this is done well because teachers have high expectations. However, in other parts of the school this is not always the case. In mathematics, teachers provide activities that give pupils opportunities to practise what they have learnt; this enables them to use and apply new skills and to develop their understanding further.
- Teachers recognise the need to provide greater challenge for the most able pupils. This is clearly seen in lessons and more pupils are now expected to achieve at higher levels.
- Teachers mark work regularly and give clear feedback to pupils in line with the school marking policy. However, too few teachers use this to identify clearly when pupils have achieved their targets, what they need to learn next and what they need to do in their next piece of work to achieve this.
- Teaching assistants are very well trained and work closely with teachers to support learning in a variety of ways. They complement teachers very well through their effective support of pupils in small groups and within classrooms. They have a considerable part to play in supporting those pupils who find learning more difficult.
- Parents believe strongly that their children progress well because of the good teaching they receive.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This is because pupils regulate their own behaviour. They understand the rules of the school and implement these themselves within the classroom and at play. They are adamant that poor behaviour is not a problem in the school. Those pupils identified with particular needs are supported very well and successfully.
- This school exudes an extremely happy and harmonious environment in which pupils learn. Staff know pupils very well and understand their individual needs, responding quickly to any concerns they may have, as one pupil said, 'It's sorted straight away.' Because of this, pupils feel happy and safe. Parents support these views and recommend the school wholeheartedly.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons and eager to learn. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. They quickly settle to tasks and can be trusted to work independently. About the school, in lessons and in the playground, pupils are kind and caring towards each other and polite and well mannered to staff and visitors. They carry out their duties as play leaders, buddies, reading friends and as members of the school council diligently, as they help to support the successful atmosphere of the school by keeping themselves out of trouble.
- Attendance is good and no pupils arrived late for registration during the inspection.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils are encouraged to learn to take responsibility for their own safety as they move through the school through a range of learning including e-safety, swimming and road safety.
- Pupils fully understand the different forms that bullying can take. A lot of work is done by the school and national awards show how well pupils understand the concept. Pupils say that bullying is rare and staff are very quick to address it effectively on the few occasions it happens.
- Parents are very pleased with the support the school gives to their children. They firmly believe their children to be very safe and do not consider behaviour or bullying to be a concern.

The leadership and management are good

- During the long-term absence of the headteacher, the deputy headteacher has very capably taken up the reins of leadership and has continued to drive the school forward. She has an excellent understanding of the strengths of the school and has successfully continued the work to improve teaching and learning, and to develop leadership.
- Actions for development from the last inspection have successfully been addressed and the school development plan has correctly identified where the school is now and what actions are needed to continue improvement. Careful and regular checks are made to ensure that these actions are continually reviewed.
- This is a school in which the skills of staff are recognised, developed and put to best use to improve the education and care of pupils. A number of changes over past months have resulted in teachers new to middle leadership roles and responsibilities. They have stepped up to the mark very well and are working diligently to continue the improving progress across all areas of the curriculum.
- Senior leaders carefully check on their areas of responsibility and clear improvements can be seen in, for example, the Reception outside learning area, in phonics, reading and in mathematics. Work is already in hand to address pupils' lower achievements in writing, especially for boys, identified by the school.
- In this school, there is a commitment for all pupils to succeed to their best ability. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Tracking of each pupil's progress is rigorous and there is a good understanding of assessment through working with other local schools, including the secondary school. The quality of teaching is checked regularly and accurately by senior leaders and, where weaker teaching is identified, appropriate training and support is put in place.
- The quality of teaching, outcomes for pupils and staff successes in addressing their roles and responsibilities are all part of teachers' annual reviews which are linked to pay awards. This process is rigorous and there are high expectations of staff to meet the required levels in order to advance through the pay structure.
- The curriculum is rich, vibrant and creative. Displays around the school are testament to the enjoyment pupils take in their learning. For example, excellent use is made of specialist staff to support the creative arts of drama, dance and music. The work of pupils in their multicultural week, with its final performance, evoked great praise from parents for the learning and enjoyment their children experienced.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted highly successfully and is reflected in the thoughtful nature and high quality of behaviour of pupils. This personal development is at the hub of learning in this school where pupils are guided to become good and conscientious citizens.
- Additional government funding for the pupil premium and for primary school sports are carefully allocated to ensure that pupils make good progress and to promote their physical well-being. Parents are kept informed of the impact of pupil premium funding through the school's website.
- The allocation of the sports funding has been used to increase physical play opportunities for pupils, to extend competitive sports and train teachers in PE. Leaders and managers are presently checking on pupils' improving fitness and performance and the improved teaching of PE.
- The local authority believes this to be a good school, which is on its way to being an outstanding school. Usually providing light touch support, the school adviser has been in school regularly during the absence of the headteacher to support leaders and managers. The school makes very good use of local authority training and specialist advisers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Drawing on the expertise of individual governors, they provide good support for the school. They know that because of actions taken since the last inspection, the quality of teaching is improving and how successfully this has impacted upon the outcomes for pupils. The

governors' audit and action plan clearly identifies actions governors need to take to improve their work, the impact they are having and where to focus next. They probe staff about the progress of pupils and use the school development plan to monitor improvements. Governors are strong in their challenge of senior leaders.

- Governors carefully manage the way that staff are rewarded. Finances are overseen well and the school is held to account for the spending of additional monies such as the pupil premium which are clearly accounted for on the website. Safeguarding practices are well documented and meet statutory requirements.

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	108336
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	430881

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorothy McGuinness
Headteacher	Jayne Lees
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2012
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