

Inspection of a good school: Swarland Primary School

Leamington Lane, Felton, Morpeth, Northumberland NE65 9JP

Inspection dates: 9 January 2020

Outcome

Swarland Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this happy and caring school. Pupils, parents, staff and governors say that the school is 'like a family'. Pupils rise to the high expectations that staff set for them. They are proud of their work. Pupils exhibit strong learning behaviours, such as resilience, tolerance and independence. Pupils follow their school mission statement to 'be the best that we can be' in their words and actions. Pupils show genuine respect for other people's ideas and viewpoints.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support. They access a full and demanding curriculum. Parents value this. Pupils with SEND make strong progress in English and mathematics.

Pupils are polite and courteous. They behave well around the school and in the playground. They have positive attitudes in lessons, where there is a buzz of excitement. They told us that bullying rarely occurs, but if it happened, staff would deal with it straight away. They say this helps them to feel safe and happy.

The vast majority of parents and carers hold the school in high regard. Parents describe the school as 'incredibly well managed' with 'dedicated staff'. They particularly appreciate the 'wide ranging, diverse curriculum'. One parent described the school as 'an excellent environment for children to excel academically and grow personally into well-rounded individuals'.

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

This school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides effective leadership. She has been pivotal in developing and empowering leaders at all levels. Together, they have established a strong, whole-school staff team. Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Leaders, staff and governors have designed a curriculum which is ambitious for all. This includes for pupils in Years 5 and 6, following the school extending its age range. The first cohort of pupils to leave Year 6 in 2019 made strong progress and achieved highly.

Leaders ensure that all curriculum plans build upon pupils' knowledge, skills and vocabulary. They plan what they want pupils to learn and by when. They set end points for pupils to reach at the expected, and higher, standards. In most subjects, delivery of these plans is well established. Pupils make links between different topics, because of what they know and remember. The curriculum in a small number of subjects is not as well implemented. This is the case for modern foreign languages, computing and geography. As a result, pupils are not as knowledgeable in these subjects.

The leader for early reading and phonics places a high priority on all pupils being able to read. Children get off to a strong start, when learning their sounds and letters in Reception. Teachers and teaching assistants provide a consistent approach when delivering phonics sessions. They have secure subject knowledge, due to accessing regular high-quality phonics training. Pupils' outcomes in phonics by the end of Year 1 have been above average for three years. All pupils, including those with SEND, read books with sounds and words they are learning in class. As a result, all pupils can read with confidence.

Appropriate activities in English and mathematics help children to learn well. They are confident and active learners. There are effective arrangements in place for children when they are ready to enter key stage 1.

The leader of mathematics has clear plans in place for each year group. Teachers plan and sequence the smaller steps of the mathematics curriculum in practice. Pupils say they enjoy mathematics. Pupils can see the relevance of mathematics and solve real-life problems. Pupils say they revisit previous learning to tackle more difficult aspects. For example, pupils apply their skills in dividing and multiplying to simplify fractions.

In history, pupils can make links between different historical events and people. They can compare Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole. Pupils could articulate with confidence who was more famous and why. Pupils also recognise how historical events can impact on modern-day life. One pupil explained: 'One point of learning about historical events is so that people do not make the same mistakes again.'

Leaders ensure that pupils learn about different cultures and faiths and democracy. Pupils value the wide range of after-school clubs. They can do sports or the arts, for example. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds attend a range of clubs. Pupils have opportunities to access an enriching curriculum which goes beyond academic learning.

Governors are proactive in developing the skills they bring to their roles. They assure themselves, through regular checks, that the school is performing well. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Staff say that leaders are considerate of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders promote a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Leaders provide regular staff training on safeguarding. This helps staff to understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff know how to spot risks to pupils. The systems in place to record and report any concerns are clear to follow. Leaders take swift follow-up actions when they receive concerns about pupils. Leaders provide timely support to pupils and their families when needed.

Pupils say that they feel safe. They learn how to keep themselves safe in, and outside, the school, including when they use the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum which is planned carefully around knowledge, skills and vocabulary. They have set out clearly what pupils need to learn, and by when, for each year group. The implementation and impact of the foundation curriculum subjects are more developed in some curriculum subjects than in others. For example, modern foreign languages, computing and geography plans are not delivered as well as other subject plans. Consequently, pupils do not remember what they have learned in these areas as well as they do in other subjects. Leaders should embed all curriculum developments, so that pupils learn more and remember more in all subjects.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school Swarland First School to be good on 29–30 September 2010.

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	122240
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10122624
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	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Maureen Bickerdike
Headteacher	Louise Fletcher
Website	http://www.swarland.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 May 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school extended its age range in September 2017. It transitioned from being a first school to a primary school.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who receive support for their special educational needs is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher, the early years leader and the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with five members of the governing body and with an officer from the local authority.
- We looked in particular detail into early reading and phonics, mathematics and history. During these activities, we met with curriculum leaders and visited lessons in each key stage. We also met with pupils and teachers and listened to pupils read. Together with leaders, we viewed examples of pupils' work in books.

- We spoke with several groups of pupils to discuss their learning and what it is like to be a pupil at this school. We also spoke to pupils when visiting lessons, and at breaktime and lunchtime. There were 68 responses to Ofsted’s online pupils’ survey.
- We reviewed documents, including: the school self-evaluation document, school improvement plan, curriculum plans, governing body meeting minutes and information from the school website.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, we reviewed a range of safeguarding-related documents. These included the single central record, safeguarding policies, training records and information relating to child protection, behaviour and attendance. We talked to staff and governors about their role in keeping pupils safe.
- We considered 32 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, and the 29 free-text responses. Several parents gave their views about the school at the start of the school day. We also considered 11 responses to Ofsted’s survey for staff and gathered the views of staff during meetings.

Inspection team

Alison Aitchison, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Angela Whistler

Ofsted Inspector

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