

Simonside Primary School

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

Inspection dates

26–27 April

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and other leaders, including governors, are highly ambitious and have a clear vision for the school. Their leadership has secured improvements in the school since the last inspection.
- Leaders and managers have worked effectively to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which are now good.
- Governors consistently challenge the school and hold senior leaders to account by measuring the impact of their actions. They know the school very well.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to adults, and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Children in the early years make a solid start to their education, make good progress and are well prepared for when they start in Year 1.
- Current pupils' progress is good and improving across all year groups in the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough pupils achieve the expected levels of attainment in key stage 1.
- The work of teaching assistants does not have sufficient impact when they are supporting groups of pupils during lessons.
- While outcomes for pupils are good overall, occasionally the most able do not have work which is sufficiently challenging to enable them to achieve their highest potential in most classes.
- Although attendance has improved over time and is now broadly average, a small number of pupils do not attend regularly.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure better outcomes for all pupils by:
 - making sure that teachers consistently challenge the most able pupils
 - ensuring that all teaching assistants allow pupils to develop their learning during support time in class.
- Improve attendance rates for the small group of pupils who do not attend regularly enough.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors are ambitious for the school and work effectively as a team to bring about continuous improvement. They have been successful in creating a culture of high expectations in which good teaching, learning and behaviour flourish.
- Since the previous inspection, middle leaders' roles have been a priority for development resulting in them being more effective. They are now more involved in checking the amount of progress pupils make through observing teaching, reviewing pupils' work and analysing pupils' performance. They lead training, identify best practice in their areas of responsibility and share this work widely across the school. This has greatly enhanced leadership capacity.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of what the school does well as a result of ongoing, extensive and rigorous monitoring of the school's performance. They have identified areas that require further improvement, and show drive and determination to ensure that continual improvement occurs.
- Staff performance is led effectively. Staff have challenging targets for their own professional development, linked to school priorities.
- Leaders and managers ensure that pupils' progress is carefully tracked. These regular checks ensure that pupils who are not doing as well as they should are identified, and that additional support is put in place to help these pupils make better progress.
- Physical education (PE) and sport funding is used effectively to raise staff expertise in the teaching of PE. Specialist PE coaches work alongside school staff and the school has provided many additional opportunities to enhance sporting skills. These include participation in a range of sporting competitions with other schools and opportunities for pupils to become involved in after-school clubs.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. Booster groups, small-group support in reading, writing and mathematics, and homework clubs have helped ensure that these pupils make the same progress as all other pupils.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. This is underpinned through the promotion of British values. For example, pupils were involved in the democratic process by participating in and electing members in a school general election.
- The school benefits from good support from the local authority. It has assisted senior leaders and governors in establishing a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system as well as delivering professional development in line with the school improvement plan. In addition, the Outer West Learning Trust, a network of 10 schools including Simonside, have helped support senior leaders in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils have good opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across other subjects in the curriculum. This contributes to the rapid progress they make in writing. Pupils also benefit from a wide variety of school clubs, such as cooking and chess. 'Super Learning Days' provide opportunities for pupils to study in depth a particular aspect of the curriculum. For example, during the 'Super Music Day', pupils were involved in rapping and developing a 'Simonside Symphony Orchestra'.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the school. Of those who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, the overwhelming majority would recommend the school to another parent. They note that their children are happy and feel safe in Simonside. One parent stated, 'The teachers are always very approachable and have really helped my children do their best.'
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have an accurate view of the school. They bring a wealth of expertise and experience to the governing body. They are committed and dedicated to supporting and challenging the school to continue to improve.
- The minutes of governing body meetings show the good level of challenge given to school leaders, a feature which was previously lacking. Governors undertake 'learning walks' to see for themselves how well pupils are learning. Leaders provide them with a good range of information on different aspects of the work of the school, including performance information.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff are regularly trained on all necessary aspects of safeguarding. The school knows its pupils very well and detailed records are kept about all safeguarding issues. A parent support adviser helps parents with their children's attendance, which is improving. All required checks on adults to work with pupils are carried out and recorded suitably. A clear culture of high-quality practice exists across the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Leaders, including governors, have been successful in improving the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching ensures that pupils make good progress with their learning. Teaching has the most impact on pupils' learning in Year 2 and Year 6.
- The quality of marking of pupils' work has improved since the previous inspection and is completed in line with the school's policy. Pupils are given guidance on how to improve their work. Most of the time pupils respond to the comments made in their teachers' marking. This is helping pupils to enhance their understanding and make further progress with their learning.
- There are excellent opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects across the curriculum. Pupils in Year 6 were encouraged to further develop their writing skills in a science lesson about the water cycle and, in Year 3, pupils were given opportunities to write about 'The rotten Roman' after visiting a local place of interest.
- Reading and the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is carefully developed throughout early years and key stage 1. Pupils' skills are deepened and extended. Leaders and teachers now make sure that those pupils who did not achieve the standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 are well supported with their reading in Year 2 and Year 3.
- Teaching assistants and teachers work closely together to ensure that timely additional support is provided for pupils. The quality of support is at its highest for those pupils involved in specific programmes to help them catch up, resulting in good academic progress, as well as strong social and emotional development. Support from teaching assistants is less well developed during general class sessions where opportunities for pupils to engage in high-quality learning are occasionally missed.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding. This also provides pupils with the opportunity to express their opinions and to respond to the views of others.
- Teachers share good practice and take opportunities to learn from one another. They assess work carefully and identify appropriate 'next steps' for pupils in their learning. However, teachers do not always challenge the most able pupils sufficiently to enable them to always make the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils are self-motivated and have positive attitudes in lessons. They are keen to share their achievements. They are proud of their school and show respect for each other and their teachers.
- Pupils reported that they feel safe and well looked after. They are confident that they would find someone in school to speak to if they had any worries or concerns. They know how to stay safe in a variety of situations, including when online. They know that, should any minor instances of misbehaviour occur, staff will resolve them quickly and effectively.
- Pupils report that bullying is very rare. They know about the different forms it can take and to whom they should report any instances.
- Every parent who replied to Parent View agreed that their child is happy and that children are kept safe in school.
- A range of strategies have been introduced to improve attendance, including regular meetings with parents and a half-termly letter highlighting the attendance of their child. While this has improved attendance and reduced the number of pupils who are persistently absent, there is still further work to be done to make sure it is even better.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This has improved since the last inspection. Most pupils behave well in lessons. Interruptions to learning are very rare and consequently pupils' progress is good.
- In lessons, pupils listen to each other and appreciate the views and opinions expressed by their classmates. They are confident to 'have a go' and understand that they learn by making mistakes and correcting them.
- The school runs a busy breakfast club which encourages pupils to be punctual and to attend more regularly. This gives the pupils the chance to start their day in a very calm and relaxed manner which ensures that they are ready to learn when they start the day's lessons.
- Pupils say they enjoy their learning, especially literacy, numeracy and physical education.
- Most pupils behave well at lunch and other breaktimes. They are appreciative of the playground friends who help them to engage in games and activities. Lunchtime supervision is supportive and effective.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Improvements in teaching are leading to pupils making better progress throughout the school in a range of different subjects across the curriculum. This is confirmed by the good and rapid progress seen in pupils' books and observations of learning across the different year groups.
- Pupils who were in Year 2 last year, despite their lower than average standards in statutory assessments, are making rapid progress this year and are catching up quickly.
- Year 6 pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. They have strong attitudes to learning and expectations of good achievement.
- There are strengths in the teaching of phonics. Consequently, at the end of Year 1, results in the phonics screening check have improved steadily and are now almost at the national average.
- The school is quick to identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Staff make effective provision for them, including extra support on the same day for any pupils who are not secure in a particular aspect of that day's learning. This also includes those pupils who have special educational needs or disability. These pupils make good progress because teachers give them activities well matched to their individual ability and needs.
- The most able pupils make similarly good progress to their classmates, although sometimes opportunities are missed to add further to the level of challenge and to stretch pupils' thinking.
- Progress has accelerated rapidly in key stage 2. Pupils are making good progress from their individual starting points. This is as a result of high-quality teaching in Year 6, alongside the sharing of this good practice with colleagues as part of professional development.
- There were gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their classmates in some year groups last year. However, by the end of key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils made more progress than their peers in writing, enabling them to catch up. Leaders have rightly identified that this remains a priority for improvement and are taking steps to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils make the progress they should.

Early years provision

is good

- Children in the early years are making good progress from their starting points where often their skills and understanding are less well developed than expected for their age. The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development by the time they left Reception in 2015 was slightly above the national average. This demonstrates a significant improvement from 2014. Overall, children are well prepared for transition to Year 1.
- There are highly positive relationships between staff, children and parents. This helps children to quickly become confident learners and have a positive attitude to school. During the inspection, children worked happily and cooperatively together. For example, when building a bridge for three billy goats, children took turns and discussed ways of making it stronger.

- Leaders regularly and carefully carry out assessments and take successful steps to ensure that children are making the progress they should. Adults quickly identify any children who may have special educational needs or disability and action is taken promptly to ensure that their needs are met, including through working with other agencies. This is evident in the way that additional services are arranged, including the introduction of a speech development initiative which helps tackle speech and language difficulties.
- Funding to support the learning of disadvantaged children is particularly well used to enhance speech and language development so their progress is similar to that of their classmates.
- Basic skills in reading, writing and number are promoted very effectively. Opportunities for children to write, mark make and count are plentiful around the early years class area.
- The leadership and management of early years is strong. Staff are constantly refining their practice in order to maintain a high standard of provision. They accurately measure the progress children make and have well thought through plans to make further improvements. Staff are committed to securing the very best outcomes for all children.
- Learning journeys are well presented. These provide a good record of the progress of each individual child, including the next stage in their learning, for parents and staff as well as for the children themselves.
- Teaching in the early years provision is typically good. Adults use praise effectively to motivate children to try their best. Adults skilfully intervene while children are learning, and help develop their speech and language and personal and social skills in particular.

School details

Unique reference number	108454
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	10011961

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Pont
Headteacher	Louise Thompson
Telephone number	0191 286 0776
Website	www.simonside.newcastle.sch.uk
Email address	admin@simonside.newcastle.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 January 2014

Information about this school

- Simonside Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of white British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability receiving support is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The school provides a breakfast club each day for its pupils.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school is part of the Outer West Learning Trust.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 24 lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher. The inspectors also heard pupils read and looked at pupils' work in their books and on display.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors met with a group of pupils, observed playtime, lunchtime and the breakfast club, and talked with pupils and staff around the school.
- The inspectors examined a range of school documents, including information on pupils' progress across the school, development plans, minutes of governing body meetings and checks on the quality of teaching. They also examined the school records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance.
- The inspectors took account of 25 responses received from parents to Parent View. In addition, inspectors spoke with parents in the playground at the start of the school day and considered several letters from parents.

Inspection team

Geoffrey Seagrove, lead inspector
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Ofsted Inspector
Her Majesty's Inspector

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