

Red Hall Primary School

Headingley Crescent, Darlington, County Durham DL1 2ST

Inspection dates

3–4 April 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has been successful in embedding a culture of care, inclusion and high expectations for pupils. The warm, welcoming and delightfully cheerful ethos is all enveloping.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher put safeguarding and the protection of pupils at the top of everyone's agenda. Pupils feel safe, valued and extremely well looked after.
- New governors are benefiting from the expertise, skill and industriousness of the recently appointed chair of the governing body. Governance is strengthening apace.
- Senior leaders' actions have ensured that the good quality of teaching and learning in each key stage has been sustained over time. Most pupils make strong progress across subjects. Specific strengths are mathematics and personal, social and emotional development.
- Senior leaders have revised their systems for assessment. In mathematics, reading and writing, pupils' progress is captured accurately. However, pupils' progress in other subjects, including science, is less effectively tracked.
- Subject leaders are knowledgeable about their areas of the curriculum. Increasingly, they are having a positive impact on provision within their subject. The quality of leaders' improvement planning, however, is variable.
- Teachers get the conditions for learning just right. Staff manage pupils' behaviour in a positive, enabling manner. Together with pupils, they skilfully debate topical issues and address any instances of derogatory language.
- Teachers use questioning effectively, getting pupils to think carefully about their work and learning. Occasionally, the most able pupils tackle things they already know and can do or have to wait while others catch up.
- Overall, pupils make good progress in English across year groups. Some inconsistencies in teachers' approaches to the teaching of reading, however, persist. Also, pupils' writing and spelling progress in key stage 1 is less strong than that in key stage 2.
- Pupils behave with tremendous courtesy and respect for adults and each other. Doors are respectfully held open, polite greetings are offered, and happy, friendly smiles light up everyone's day.
- The early years is very well led and managed. Provision for two-year-olds, in particular, is of an exceptionally high quality. From typically low and, sometimes, very low starting points, children make extremely good progress across areas of learning. By the end of Reception, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development matches the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the effectiveness of leadership and governance by:
 - sharpening the quality of improvement planning to ensure that actions are focused more meticulously on honing the quality of teaching and learning
 - refining approaches to the teaching of reading to achieve greater consistency
 - raising the quality of teaching and learning in writing and spelling in key stage 1 higher still
 - assessing pupils' progress in the wider curriculum, including science, with better accuracy.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning further by:
 - making sure that pupils' progress in subjects across the wider curriculum matches the strongest in reading, writing and mathematics
 - stretching the most able pupils more consistently so that a higher proportion reach greater depths of learning by the end of key stage 2
 - making sure that all pupils read widely and regularly with skilled adults in school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is ambitious for pupils. Together with her deputy, she ensures that the principles of the 'believe and achieve' motto are borne out in practice. This puts British values firmly at the heart of the school's day-to-day work. Adults and pupils alike feel welcome and valued in this calm, extremely inviting and nurturing environment. As a result of this very positive ethos, pupils make exceptional gains in their personal, moral, social and emotional development.
- Senior leaders' actions have been successful in sustaining the good quality of teaching and learning across subjects in key stages 1 and 2. Teachers are well supported in building their expertise and developing their teaching practices. Regular, high-quality professional development and training opportunities are much valued by staff. Overall, pupils' progress across the curriculum is good and mathematics is a particular strength.
- Leaders provide an enriching curriculum for pupils. They strive to offer pupils a rich diet of first-hand experiences that give pupils a taste for what life has to offer. For example, trips to the ballet, museums, places of worship and theatres all serve to stir pupils' curiosity and excite interest in the world beyond school. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' skills of resilience, as well as their sense of adventure and self-belief.
- Senior leaders and governors make sure that the additional primary physical education (PE) and sports funding is used wisely. Pupils build a solid bank of knowledge and interests in a wide range of sport. They develop a competitive edge and skills of perseverance and teamwork while engaging in different PE activities including archery, cycling and swimming. A good understanding of the benefits of healthy lifestyles is successfully fostered among pupils.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a strong understanding of the quality of education experienced by disadvantaged pupils. They know where strengths and weaknesses lie, carefully directing pupil premium funding where it is most needed. Consequently, most disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Senior leaders have recently introduced a new system for capturing pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They compare and check pupils' work carefully, to ensure that assessment information is accurate. Teachers, therefore, are increasingly well supported in planning for pupils in these subjects. However, leaders have not yet embedded their systems for assessment in the wider curriculum. For example, information about current pupils' progress in science is vague.
- Senior leaders have raised the profile of reading. Online reading programmes and new books have been purchased, attractive reading dens have been put in place and volunteers are used to offer pupils additional opportunities to read with adults. Nonetheless, systems and the approach to reading vary from class to class. Not all staff capture accurately when and what pupils are reading. Inconsistencies mean leaders cannot be confident that all pupils read books that are matched closely to their needs, widely and regularly. Records show that some pupils read infrequently, which hampers their ability to catch up with their national peers.

- Subject leaders are full of enthusiasm for their area of the curriculum. They have strong subject knowledge and offer support and guidance for staff. Whole school and subject improvement planning, however, is lacking in detail. It is not always clear when tasks will take place or who will be responsible. Also, actions are not linked effectively with desired improvements to the quality of teaching and/or pupils' outcomes. For example, plans to tackle the issues in key stage 1, regarding the quality of teaching and learning in writing and spelling, are too vague.

Governance of the school

- The recently appointed chair of governors is skilled and knowledgeable. She has lost no time in sharpening up the procedures and practices of the governing body. She has, for example, ensured that all governors have accessed training materials and opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills of governance. Minutes from meetings show that governors' actions are leading to more carefully targeted support and a greater depth of challenge for leaders.
- The governing body has a full complement of governors. Historically, it has been difficult to recruit sufficient members. This means that governors are now well placed to execute their responsibilities and duties, fulsomely.
- Several governors are new since the previous inspection. There is a keen desire among all governors to monitor the school's performance with more precision and heightened skill. To this end, governors have undertaken an audit to check that they have the right balance of knowledge and skills to manage their duties effectively. They meet regularly and visit school frequently to check for themselves how it feels to be a pupil here. Governors, therefore, are increasingly effective and far-sighted; those new to governance are growing apace in proficiency and confidence.
- Governors are currently tweaking some aspects of the website to ensure that it fully meets statutory requirements. All required information is available first-hand.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Together with her deputy, the headteacher has prioritised the safety and protection of pupils. Regular, high-quality training means that staff understand and execute their duties well. All staff listen carefully to pupils, putting their care and safety first. Staff know to whom and how to report any concerns that they may have. A culture of vigilance is tangible.
- Leaders make sure that safeguarding records meet requirements. For example, employment and identity checks on adults working with pupils are thorough. Leaders make sure that stringent checks are in place during recruitment processes to ensure that those appointed are suitable to work with children. This means that staff and pupils are protected appropriately.
- The headteacher has ensured that a dedicated, pastoral team are readily available to support pupils and families. They coordinate their efforts extremely well with each

other and outside agencies and professionals such as police, health and social work. This means that pupils' needs are identified promptly and met comprehensively, thereby mitigating risks for pupils. Vulnerable pupils and their families benefit from such high-quality liaison, care and attention.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are secure in their own subject knowledge and plan tasks that meet the needs of most pupils, effectively. Most pupils therefore make strong progress across subjects, leaving key stage 2 suitably well prepared for their secondary education.
- Teachers build very positive partnerships with pupils and their families. They share leaders' vision and aspirations for pupils, artfully getting the conditions for learning just right. Classrooms are organised effectively and have a very pleasant, welcoming ethos. Class rules are fair, consistent and well understood. Pupils, therefore, are eager to please, ready to learn and enjoy their work. Their personal, social and emotional needs are met exceptionally well.
- Staff and pupils work successfully together to tackle any instances of derogatory language in and out of school. They debate and discuss word choices, exploring what is non-discriminatory and acceptable. Even the youngest pupils keep each other right if an inappropriate or provocative choice of vocabulary is made.
- Most adults explain new learning clearly to pupils and, where appropriate, show pupils how to apply this knowledge to tasks and activities. Furthermore, staff make good use of questioning. They skilfully get beneath comments and responses to check pupils' understanding and to address misconceptions. This is especially evident in mathematics, where pupils enjoy tackling increasingly complex problems and apply their reasoning skills well. Pupils make particularly strong progress in mathematics across year groups.
- In each key stage, pupils make good progress in English overall. This is because teachers use assessment effectively to shape learning and tasks for pupils, building on their prior learning well. In addition, adults use subject-specific terminology, such as consonants, digraphs, fronted adverbials and finite verbs, knowledgeably and encourage pupils to do so too. However, pupils' books show some inconsistencies in the quality of work in writing and spelling. Some pupils, in key stage 1, make slower progress in these areas.
- Most teachers read regularly with pupils and scrutinise their reading choices carefully. Classrooms and outdoor environments are rich in literacy. Reading for pleasure is promoted and there are books and reading materials aplenty. Nonetheless, teachers' systems and reading logs differ. Some pupils read too infrequently to catch up rapidly with their national peers to reach and/or exceed age-related expectations.
- The most able pupils sometimes have to wait for others to catch up or to receive appropriate challenge in their tasks and learning. Some tackle work they already know and can do. Not all make the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils and staff are full of smiles and words of welcome. Good manners and pleasant interactions abound meaning a happy, friendly 'buzz' is ever-present.
- Pupils' well-being and happiness are of the utmost importance to leaders. Their vision for sociable, healthy and confident pupils is evident in all that they do. For example, staff encourage pupils to recognise, manage and minimise risks, online and in day-to-day life. They grapple with physical, social and personal challenges, building their emotional resilience, effectively. Consequently, pupils can talk knowledgeably about how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations.
- Staff and pupils regularly debate and discuss issues such as earning respect, equality, anti-social behaviour and tolerance, in a considered manner. Red Hall offers a secure space to voice opinions. Pupils' spiritual and moral skills are developed exceptionally well.
- Dedicated staff work diligently with external agencies, meeting the needs of pupils and families to the highest of standards. Pupils who spoke with inspectors and those who responded to Ofsted's survey said that they feel protected, extremely safe and very well looked after in school. They are particularly appreciative of the many trusted adults to whom they feel they can turn where issues inside or outside of school arise.
- Pupils know about bullying and understand the different forms it may take. They have complete faith in adults, and in each other, to manage any rare incidents that occur.
- All adults see their duties as extending beyond the school gates. For example, thorough systems for transition to secondary school are in place to mitigate any fears or worries pupils may have. Coupled with the excellent provision for two-year-olds, children and pupils moving to and from the school are exceedingly well supported.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct in and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are very considerate of each other and adults. Older pupils, without prompting, care for and look after their younger peers, helping them with coats or heavy equipment. In corridors, they hold doors open for each other, adults and visitors. During breaks, they get along extremely well and thoroughly enjoy each other's company.
- Almost all pupils exercise excellent self-discipline and self-control, requiring little in the way of reminders from staff. Staff are skilled in employing positive behaviour management techniques; they have a deep understanding of the cause and effect of any overt and covert behaviour. As a result, the very small proportion of pupils with particular behavioural needs are supported exceptionally well. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare.

- The large majority of parents and carers are very confident that pupils behave well. Some parents who responded to Ofsted's survey commented that teachers 'always make time to help', 'assist every child to achieve the best they can' and so support children to 'thrive'. They describe this as a 'fantastic, caring school completely focused on children and their families'. Most parents were absolutely sure that any issues of poor behaviour would be managed effectively by staff.
- Leaders' monitoring of records of pupils' behaviour is meticulous. An online system comprehensively captures any issues and concerns raised by staff, including racist and homophobic incidents. Recurring issues or emerging patterns are spotted promptly and managed extremely well. Such diligence ensures that pupils are well supported in maintaining their excellent behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Currently, pupils are making strong progress. From typically low starting points, most pupils develop the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to make effective progress across the wider curriculum, as well as in English and mathematics. Over time, by the end of key stage 2, most pupils are suitably well prepared for the demands of key stage 3.
- Pupils' progress in terms of their personal, social and emotional development is exceptional. Adults' skilful approach to promoting self-belief, positive communication, consideration for others and tolerance among pupils ensures that adults' high expectations are met successfully. Pupils exert self-control, develop emotional resilience and listen carefully to others.
- Over time, in key stage 2, pupils' progress in mathematics has remained above the national average. In 2018, pupils' attainment at the expected standard broadly matched others nationally. In key stage 1, the proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding the expected standards in mathematics has remained above national averages for the last two years. Currently, the school's own assessment information and pupils' books show that positive outcomes in mathematics are being sustained.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, overall. The proportion of pupils in key stage 1 and 2 reaching the expected standards in reading has remained broadly in line with national averages over time. However, pupils' outcomes in phonics in Year 1 are more variable from year to year. While most current cohorts are making expected progress in their reading and phonics due to leaders' and teachers' effective work, the progress of some pupils is less strong. Not all pupils read frequently or widely with skilled staff. At times, some lower-attaining pupils' reading books are poorly matched to their phonics skills and needs.
- Most pupils currently are making strong progress from typically low starting points in writing. However, pupils' outcomes in writing by the end of key stage 2 have been variable over time. In 2016 and again in 2018, key stage 2 pupils' progress was well below national averages. At present, some pupils, especially in key stage 1, repeat errors in spelling and their written work, over time. By the end of Year 2, not all pupils present their writing neatly, rereading it to check that it makes sense and is correctly punctuated.

- Around three-quarters of pupils are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding. For the most part, disadvantaged pupils' outcomes are in keeping with their within-school and national peers. This is because of leaders' careful use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and the good-quality teaching and learning that exists.
- Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress from their different starting points in English and mathematics. Teachers know pupils well and make sure that work is tailored effectively to meet their needs.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The early years is led exceptionally well. Leaders are uncompromising in their drive to improve outcomes and life chances for all children. One parent's view captured the views of many: 'The headteacher is fantastic and genuinely cares for children's welfare and education.' Children settle quickly, are very happy and are extremely well looked after. They get off to a very strong start and thrive as they move through the early years.
- Teachers use assessment information and their knowledge of each child to plan tasks that meet their needs very well. From below, and sometimes well below, typical starting points, children make substantial and sustained progress over time. High-quality teaching and well-thought-out provision ensure that most children are ready for the demands of key stage 1, by the time they leave the Reception class.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the time they leave Reception is rising year-on-year. Staff understand that children need to develop considerable fluency in the basic skills of communication, reading, writing and number to get the best out of the Year 1 curriculum. In 2018, outcomes in each learning goal were broadly in line with the national average. This denotes excellent progress from their starting points.
- The provision for two-year-olds is extremely effective. Staff treat children with dignity, kindness and respect, meeting their care and learning needs skilfully. All adults have a keen understanding of the big difference in development between children at two years old and their older three- or four-year-old peers. Staff amend their approach and manner accordingly and are endlessly patient and good-humoured.
- In Nursery, children make rapid progress, learning to share, take turns and listen to others. They are full of happy smiles and get along well together as staff fire their enthusiasm and interest in the world around them. All listen to stories with rapt attention, joining in with repetitive storylines with enormous enjoyment.
- Staff in each year group have an excellent rapport with children. They build positive, productive links with families. Good use is made of outside agencies and expertise where needed, for example speech therapists and health professionals. Staff make sure that everyone works together to the benefit of the child.
- Adults use the indoor and outdoor environments imaginatively. Drawing on children's interests, they make sure that there are plenty of opportunities for children to practise and apply their increasingly sophisticated skills of literacy and numeracy. Consequently, children are challenged effectively and find tasks and provision stimulating.

- Children's safety is of prime concern. Staff know and understand well their duties and responsibilities in terms of keeping children safe. They receive regular training, including in paediatric first aid, they are vigilant and ensure that welfare requirements are fully met. Hygiene and healthy choices are promoted skilfully by adults.

School details

Unique reference number	114183
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10088982

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Barrigan
Headteacher	Julie Davidson
Telephone number	01325 254 770
Website	www.redhallprimary-darlington.co.uk
Email address	admin@redhall.darlington.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 July 2018

Information about this school

- This is a slightly smaller than average-sized primary school catering for pupils from 2 to 11 years of age.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. There are currently few pupils in the school compared to national averages who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is much higher than other schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than national averages. The proportion of pupils with SEND who have an education, health and care plan is also higher than national averages.
- There have been several changes in leadership, including governors and staff since the last inspection. A deputy headteacher and a special educational needs coordinator have recently taken up post. Most governors are new, including the chair of the governing

body who took up post in September 2017. There have also been some changes to teaching staff.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed across each key stage over both days of the inspection. Several observations were undertaken jointly by the lead inspector and the headteacher and by the team inspector and the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors talked with parents face-to-face during the inspection. The views expressed by 29 parents in the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. In addition, 27 parents' free-text responses were taken into account.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, scrutinised their work and talked with pupils during lesson observations. The views of 90 pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire were examined. The views of pupils were also considered during formal and informal discussions.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, a representative from the local authority and governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- A wide range of the school's own information and documentation was studied, including the self-evaluation document, improvement and subject action plans and records of the checks made on teaching and learning. Information about safeguarding practices was examined, alongside policy documentation.
- The opinions of staff were taken into account via the 30 responses made to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and through formal and informal discussions.

Inspection team

Fiona Manuel, lead inspector

Jo Warner

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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