

Hardwick Green Primary Academy

Tithe Barn Road, Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham, TS19 8WF

Inspection dates 3–4 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Strong leadership from the Principal, senior leaders and governors has brought about significant improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. As a result, pupils are making much better progress and standards are rising quickly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy school. Their positive attitudes to learning and their good behaviour make a strong contribution to their achievement and well-being.
- The school provides a supportive and caring environment where pupils feel safe and secure. Parents agree their children feel safe and are cared for well.
- Provision for children in the early years is effective because of good teaching and the focus on developing children's social, emotional and communication skills.
- Teaching is now good because leaders have taken decisive action to address underperformance. Staff are provided with the training they need to develop and improve their skills.
- Pupils are friendly and polite to one another, to adults in school and to visitors. They show respect and tolerance to those from different cultures and communities. As such, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Vulnerable pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress because they are very well supported.
- Procedures to support safeguarding and child welfare are exceptionally strong and effective.
- Attendance is broadly average. The number of pupils with persistent absence has reduced significantly in recent terms.
- Working with partner schools within the academy trust has improved the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, pupils are making better progress.
- Governors, supported by the academy trust, provide good support and challenge to the school. They are committed to ensuring pupils achieve as well as they can.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking does not always give pupils precise guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils do not always have opportunities to act upon advice when given.
- Pupils' handwriting and presentation are not always good.
- The skills of subject leaders in checking on teaching and learning in their subjects are not fully developed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons across each key stage. All lessons were jointly observed with the Principal or vice-principal. In addition, inspectors talked with pupils about their work, looked at books, listened to some pupils read and observed pupils at breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, vice-principal and staff with key leadership responsibilities. They held discussions with pupils, governors and a representative of the Enquire Learning Trust.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including: the school’s own checks on the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils’ progress; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire (Parent View) to be published. Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day and received a response by telephone. The inspectors also received and considered 20 returns to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Wilson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sonia Humble

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Hardwick Green Primary Academy opened in June 2013 and is part of the Enquire Learning Trust. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported by the pupil premium, is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly higher than the national average.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2014, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Provision in the Nursery is part time. Children attend full time in the Reception class.
- There have been significant staff changes in recent terms. This includes changes to the senior leadership team with the appointment of three 'Leaders of Learning' to support the work of the Principal and vice-principal.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so more is outstanding to further raise pupils' achievement by:
 - making sure pupils are given clear guidance on how they can improve their work
 - ensuring that pupils act upon advice given for improvement and check that improvements are maintained
 - improving the quality of handwriting and presentation so that pupils' written work is of a consistently high standard.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to enable them to be fully involved in checking on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Strong and determined leadership by senior leaders and governors has resulted in significant improvements in teaching. As a result, pupils are now making good and often rapid progress.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and correctly identifies priorities and actions to bring about further improvements. Senior leaders make good use of data to ensure that all groups of pupils behave and achieve as well as they can. They ensure that any pupils in danger of falling behind are given appropriate support to help them catch up with others.
- Leaders check on the accuracy of assessment by sharing information across year groups and across partner schools. A consistent approach to planning for learning in each year group supports the improvements made in teaching and pupils' progress. Middle leaders are not all, however, fully involved in evaluating and improving the quality of provision in their own areas of responsibility. Senior leaders have identified where they would benefit from additional support and training.
- Much of the rapid progress made in the school, results from the additional support and challenge from partner schools within the academy trust. Effective joint school-to-school working in areas of staff training, sharing expertise, moderation of pupils' achievement and the impact of teaching are routinely considered and help with school priorities for improvement.
- The school has made good progress in the introduction of the new curriculum with well-planned activities that engage pupils and capture their interest. Such activities are enriched by a variety of after-school clubs, visits to places of local interest and activities that develop pupils' sporting, musical and creative talents.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. It is fully established in the school's values, beliefs and subjects taught so that tolerance and many other British values are promoted well. There is a strong emphasis on promoting good relations, valuing others and the contribution each person makes to the success of the school. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The additional pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. Regular checks are made on pupils' attainment and progress to ensure that any gaps are being addressed as quickly and effectively as possible. Current evidence indicates accelerated progress in closing the gaps in attainment between this group and other pupils nationally.
- The primary school sport and physical education (PE) funding is used effectively to promote a healthy lifestyle and develop sporting skills and talents. The use of skilled coaches and links with organisations such as Middlesbrough Football Club has improved the opportunities for high-quality PE and sport. In addition, funding has enabled staff to develop their level of skill and expertise to teach PE and sport effectively.
- The promotion of equal opportunities is well established across the school. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. This is a view echoed by Key Stage 2 pupils. 'Everyone is treated the same and that helps everyone do well.' reflects a typical pupil comment.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Systems to address safeguarding and child protection are well established. Very effective systems are in place to ensure the academic, physical, social and emotional well-being of pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an accurate view of the school's rapid improvement. They are well informed about the quality of teaching, the achievement of pupils and the school's priorities for improvement. Governors take every opportunity to engage in training, sometimes with school staff, to increase their ability to both support and challenge senior leaders. This is contributing strongly to the school's rapid improvement.
 - Governors ensure that available finances, including the additional pupil premium and school sports funding, are used effectively to promote pupils' achievement and progress. Governors ensure the school's pay policy is linked to teachers' performance and they are fully aware of how underperformance is addressed.
 - Governors are clear about their responsibilities. They make sure legal requirements, such as safeguarding, are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are very positive about their school. They work well with their classmates when engaged in paired or group activities. When presented with tasks they typically show good levels of concentration and often show good resilience to complete work, even if they find learning to be challenging.
- Around the school at break times and lunchtimes, behaviour is good and sometimes excellent. Pupils play cooperatively with others. They are polite and well mannered and show respect to one another and to adults in school. They are keen to share their learning and are eager to demonstrate how well they have achieved.
- Pupils appreciate opportunities to take responsibility. For example, they enjoy their roles as school councillors and opportunities to be involved in organising and running charity events linked to raising funds for local and national charities.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that poor behaviour was not a concern because everyone looks after one another. Should inappropriate behaviour occur, they were confident that adults would very quickly resolve it. Parents spoken with supported this view.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe in school. 'I like school because everyone looks after you if you feel sad or worried.' reflects a typical pupil comment. Parents agree their children are kept safe and are cared for well.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the different types of bullying, such as pushing, name-calling and racist remarks. They say bullying is rare and if it does happen, adults sort it out straight away. Pupils say they are confident that they could approach any adult in school if they have any worries or concerns.
- Pupils have a very good awareness of how to stay safe both in and outside school. For example, Year 1 and 2 pupils have a very good understanding about safe travel to and from school including safe places to cross the road. Key Stage 2 pupils have an excellent awareness of cyber-bullying and know what to do should they come across inappropriate images on mobile phones or computers.
- Safeguarding procedures to ensure pupils' safety, health and well-being are excellent. Regular training on safeguarding for staff and governors ensure this area is given a high priority. Excellent links with external welfare agencies ensure vulnerable pupils are well supported and their needs met.
- Work to raise attendance has been successful. Fewer pupils are now persistently absent. Attendance is now broadly average.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers and teaching assistants are skilful in creating supportive and trusting relationships with pupils. This in turn leads to the school's positive ethos for learning and, as a result, pupils are calm and feel secure.
- Teachers engage pupils' interest well and look for every opportunity to excite and enthuse pupils in their learning. For example, Year 2 pupils were highly motivated to write a series of newspaper headlines linked to a crime scene that gave clues as to the disappearance of Little Red Riding Hood.
- Teachers provide good verbal feedback to pupils so that they are clear about how well they have achieved. However, the school's marking policy is not consistently applied and the quality of marking of pupils' work is variable. Pupils' work is marked regularly and in some instances, comments are provided to help pupils improve their work. This is not consistent across the school, however. As a result, pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work. In addition, pupils are not always given sufficient opportunity to carry out corrections or respond to teachers' comments.
- Teachers and skilled teaching assistants provide good support to vulnerable pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Carefully-planned activities that closely match the needs of these pupils are successful in ensuring these pupils catch up with their classmates or do not fall behind.
- The teaching of reading is given a high priority in the school. Changes to how phonics (letters and their sounds) is taught show good impact and more pupils are able to blend sounds and letters to read and spell new words. Standards are rising quickly in reading. This is supported by evidence inspectors gained when listening to pupils read.

- The teaching of writing is good. Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to write for different purposes. Achievement in writing is improving quickly because pupils are given clear guidance on how to structure their writing and use grammar, punctuation and spelling accurately. This framework for writing helps pupils plan their work so that they are confident when they come to write independently.
- Although the quality of writing is improving, standards of handwriting and presentation are not always good. Some younger pupils find it difficult to achieve a consistent style and size of writing, while older pupils do not always give enough attention to the presentation of their work.
- The teaching of mathematics is also good. Standards in mathematics are improving quickly because of increased challenge and opportunities to use basic skills of number to solve problems. For example, pupils in Year 4 made excellent progress in using and applying their mathematical thinking and reasoning to solve a series of complex problems. Learning tasks were well matched to different ability groups. As a result, all pupils were totally engrossed in their work, used a variety of mathematical skills and explained their learning and the decision and solutions they achieved.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is improving. In Year 6 in 2014, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was below the government's floor standard. Typically, attainment in reading and mathematics was 18 months behind that seen nationally and 15 months behind in writing. Inspection evidence indicates that the current Year 6 pupils will be at or just above the government's current floor standards. Gaps in attainment compared to pupils nationally have decreased, with pupils roughly three months behind in reading and six months behind in writing and mathematics.
- Achievement data and evidence of pupils' current work indicate that most pupils are now making good progress. They are making rapid progress in the Reception Year, Year 1 and Year 4. Rapid improvements in teaching and increased expectations of the progress pupils should make are leading to more pupils making expected progress and an increasing proportion making more than expected progress.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonic screening check is in line with the national average. This represents good progress from pupils' previous starting points. Inspection evidence shows there is year-on-year improvement, reflecting the improvements in teaching to support pupils both in reading and writing.
- Over the past year, the school has raised the level of challenge presented to the most able pupils. Most pupils are making good progress. In a few instances, however, the most able are not always challenged sufficiently to achieve as well as they could.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making the same progress as their classmates. Staff are skilled in identifying and supporting those pupils with specific learning needs. They move quickly to address gaps in pupils' understanding and remove barriers to learning.
- The school is successfully closing the gap in achievement for disadvantaged pupils. In Year 6 in 2014, attainment for this group in reading was two months ahead of other pupils in school and 12 months ahead in writing. Attainment in mathematics, however, was six months behind. When compared to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were about 12 months behind in reading, eight months behind in writing and six months behind in mathematics.

The early years provision is good

- Children enter nursery with skills below those typical for their age. For a significant proportion of children, entry levels are low, particularly in communication skills and in personal and social development. There has been a slight rise in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. However, as yet, not all children are fully prepared for Year 1.
- Staff know children well and make accurate assessments of their skills and knowledge. They use this information to guide the planning of activities that motivate and engage children in their learning. As a result, children, including the most able, achieve well. Information about children's achievements is regularly reviewed and contributes to the children's 'Learning Journals'. They provide a good record of the activities in which children engage but do not always make clear the progress they have made over time.
- Good teaching makes imaginative use of resources inside the classroom and in the outdoor space to support children's learning. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-led activities, all of which have a clear focus for learning.
- Children have many opportunities to practise their skills. For example, nursery children were highly

motivated when planning a visit to the indoor seaside area. Children recorded things they might take to and see at the seaside. They used magnifying glasses to identify creatures found on the sand and in the water. They carefully matched them to picture cards. They made good progress in understanding which creatures live on the beach and which live under water.

- Adults ensure children are kept safe and every opportunity is taken to develop children's confidence and ability to take responsibility for their own learning. Through effective questioning and discussion, staff skilfully extend children's thinking skills and develop their ability to use language more precisely. Well-established routines and high expectations ensure children are clear about what is expected of them. As a result, children behave well and want to learn.
- Early identification of children with specific needs enables staff to provide high-quality support to meet the needs of vulnerable children, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs. These children progress at the same rates as other children.
- Leadership and management are good. The early years leader works closely with her team and has a very clear understanding of the strengths of the provision and where improvement is needed. High-quality training addresses the needs of the early years team. This is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching. The early years leader is determined to raise standards of writing from good to outstanding by increasing the opportunities for writing in the outdoor area.

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	139392
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	449913

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	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Squires
Headteacher	Ruth Pickering
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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