

Inspection of Benfieldside Primary School

Moorlands, Blackhill, Consett, County Durham DH8 0JX

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Benfieldside Primary School is valued by its community. It is a safe and caring place. There are well-developed routines that make sure the day is calm and orderly. Pupils are proud to attend. They are adamant that bullying does not happen. Older pupils enjoy taking on leadership responsibilities. Some serve on the school council or the eco-committee. Others support their teachers with day-to-day errands, helping the school to run smoothly.

However, the quality of education is variable. Children do not get enough ongoing help to develop their language and their thinking in the early years. In the main school, the quality of curriculum planning is underdeveloped in subjects such as science, computing and art. These gaps mean pupils are not securing the subject knowledge they will need when they move to secondary school. Leaders have made sure that reading is taught well.

The school's curriculum for pupils' wider development is better. Pupils learn how to stay safe online. They learn about relationships and about the importance of treating one another respectfully. Pupils take part in activities specifically designed to build their teamworking and problem-solving skills. There are good opportunities to learn about the world of work.

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

Senior leaders are yet to develop a clear and ambitious vision for high-quality education across the school. It is a mixed picture. There is some well-planned tutoring support in place to help pupils catch up after the pandemic. Leaders are thoughtfully addressing gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge. But curriculum planning in other subjects is too variable. The knowledge to be taught is not clearly identified. Some important concepts that underpin subjects are not covered. It is not clear what pupils should know or by when. Planning does not identify when essential content will be revisited and recapped. The lack of rigour and detail means pupils are not remembering as much content as they should. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented some training for subject leaders, senior leaders were not aware of these deficiencies in their curriculum planning.

Leaders have rightly prioritised reading. All children get phonics teaching from the start of the Reception Year. Careful assessment means children are taught phonics at the right pace. Teachers accurately match books to each pupil's knowledge. This helps almost all pupils to grow in confidence and to develop as fluent readers by the end of key stage 1. Pupils' comprehension skills are developed effectively in key stage 2. Teachers in Years 3 and 4 have been trained in the school's phonics programme, so they can help the few pupils who still need to develop their decoding skills.

Teachers have good relationships with their classes. Most lessons include some revisiting of content to check what pupils know. Sometimes this is done well, but in

other lessons it happens too quickly, and pupils' misconceptions are not addressed. In some lessons, teachers' explanations are not clear or precise enough, leaving pupils unsure. Again, it is a mixed picture. Some teachers implement their lesson plans well and extend pupils' knowledge effectively.

The good relationships evident across the school ensure lessons are rarely disrupted. If it does happen, teachers deal with it quickly. Pupils who have behaved poorly are guided to reflect on their behaviour. Most learn from this and improve their approach. Most pupils show positive attitudes and are keen to please. Teachers and teaching assistants adapt the work for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. However, the targets in some support plans for these pupils are too vague to be helpful for teachers.

Leaders are committed to pupils' wider development. Counselling is provided for pupils who are anxious. Healthy eating is promoted by the food and nutrition group. Exercise activities are developed well in physical education (PE). Football and yoga clubs are back up and running. The personal, social and health education lessons cover a wide range of topics to help pupils understand relationships and personal safety. Provision for pupils' personal development is good.

The quality of early years education requires improvement. The early years leader has a more developed vision, and the curriculum is planned in more detail. The teaching of early reading, writing and mathematics is suitably planned. However, some adults do not implement these plans well enough. In the Reception class, some tasks do not expect enough of children. Adults do not extend children's thinking or use of language well enough as they play together. These means that not enough children develop the language and communication skills they should before starting Year 1.

Senior leaders have the backing of the staff. Staff feel leaders look after their well-being and take steps to reduce their workload. The last inspection asked the school to develop the role of governors more. New governors are now in place. But governors are still not consistently providing the scrutiny they should. Most of their visits do not result in meaningful probing or challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher knows the pupils and the community well. Parents like the way she is always around when they drop off or pick up their children. The headteacher ensures the staff are trained and understand what to do if they have a concern about a child. Prompt action is taken when needed in conjunction with colleagues in social care. This means concerns are quickly resolved. There are good systems in place to make sure all necessary vetting checks are made on adults who work in the school. Pupils are taught about how to stay safe. For example, pupils know they could meet people who cannot be trusted when gaming online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of curriculum planning, particularly in science and the wider curriculum, lacks depth and detail. Plans do not make clear what knowledge is to be covered. What pupils should know and by when is not clear. The revisiting of knowledge to help pupils remember more is not planned carefully. This means that pupils' recall of important knowledge and concepts is underdeveloped. Senior leaders must ensure that subject leaders get the training they need to design more rigorous curriculum plans.
- The use of ongoing assessment is variable. Sometimes teachers spot misconceptions in pupils' knowledge but do not stop to address them properly. This risks these misconceptions becoming problems later on. Leaders should check that teachers are using assessment more carefully, so that gaps in knowledge are addressed quickly.
- The targets set for pupils with SEND are too vague. They do not give enough guidance to teachers on how to adapt their lessons. It also means it is hard to measure what difference these support plans are making. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the staff should aim for sharper, more measurable targets so that the progress these pupils make can be reviewed more accurately.
- Some tasks prepared for children in the early years lack ambition and some of the talk between adults and children is not developmental enough. This holds back children's speech and language development. The early years leader should be given the time necessary to raise the expectations of the team and to check that provision is improving.
- Despite new membership and new leadership of the governing body, the governors are not consistently providing the level of scrutiny needed. Governors are not questioning or challenging leaders enough. The governors need to ensure they hold leaders to account for the work needed to get back to being a good school.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

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| Unique reference number | 114045 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 10200722 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 236 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Victoria Knapp |
| Headteacher | Caroline Addison |
| Website | www.benfieldside.durham.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 27 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, an assistant headteacher has been appointed to join the senior leadership team.
- The chair and vice-chair of the governing body took up post in autumn of 2020. Several new governors have also joined the governing body since the last inspection.
- The school offers a breakfast club from 8am each morning.
- The school does not place any pupils with alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. Inspectors also met a representative of the local authority.
- An inspector met members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- Inspectors undertook deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also met subject leaders for computing, music, art, geography and religious education to review and discuss curriculum planning in these subjects.
- An inspector met the SENCo and checked the quality of support plans for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors visited the Nursery and Reception classes and met the early years leader.
- An inspector visited the breakfast club.
- Inspectors looked at the school's record of vetting checks made on adults who work in the school. An inspector met the safeguarding lead and checked the quality of the school's safeguarding records. Inspectors also discussed safeguarding arrangements with leaders, teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's parental survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys. An inspector also talked to some parents to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Katie Spurr

Her Majesty's Inspector

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