

Inspection of a good school: Shield Row Primary School

King Edward VIII Terrace, Shield Row, Stanley, County Durham DH9 0HQ

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 November 2023

Outcome

Shield Row Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Arriving at the school is like entering a wonderland. Corridors and classrooms are beautifully and painstakingly displayed. Pupils' work adorns the walls and reflects the rich curriculum offer.

The school sets high expectations for pupils to be successful, working tirelessly for this to happen. Pupils respond positively to this. Classrooms are industrious, with pupils engaged in their learning and productive. No time is wasted.

Strong relationships are the bedrock of the school's success. This starts in the early years, where children quickly respond to the high expectations set of them. Here, natural curiosity is harnessed into exceptional learning behaviours. This continues across the school, where pupils' behaviour is excellent.

Playtimes are lively events. There is a lot on offer. Playground leaders are never too far away to offer a helping hand to any one short of something to do. This is a happy school where pupils thrive.

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

Curriculums are highly ambitious. The small steps in knowledge are mapped out carefully. Knowledge organisers condense the key information for each unit of study into helpful guides. Pupils find these useful in helping them to know and remember more. Key vocabulary is identified to enable pupils to begin to talk more confidently about their studies. The school has achieved consistency in how curriculums are organised and implemented.

Each unit of study makes links to the world of work to improve pupils' knowledge of career options and to raise aspirations. For example, pupils in science studied time zones and weather patterns through the eyes of meteorologists. This is providing a relevant context for pupils' learning.

Occasionally, some activities presented to pupils are too ambitious. Pupils have not secured the underpinning knowledge needed to tackle the activities well enough. For example, pupils in science were asked to undertake fair testing without the requisite knowledge of recording and variables to do so. Likewise, in mathematics, pupils were asked to reason and problem-solve without having a secure understanding of the range of strategies needed. This aspect of curriculum development is more recently introduced and is not yet embedded.

The school prioritises reading. It has established a strong reading culture. In Nursery, children are immersed in stories and rhymes that ignite a love of books. Children in Reception learn to read from day one. This continues into key stage 1. The school ensures that pupils read books closely matched to their phonics knowledge. This helps pupils to read with increasing confidence. Aspects of the phonics programme relating to writing are less well developed, particularly early letter formation.

As pupils progress through the school, they begin to read a wide range of high-quality texts. A giant reading tree is the centrepiece of the well-stocked library. Pupils are challenged and encouraged to read more widely. The 'tree challenge' encourages pupils in each year group to read 50 books across the school year. Pupils aspire to do so. Older pupils are keen to support younger children in their roles as librarians and reading 'buddies.'

The school provides exceptionally well for pupils' personal development. Nothing is left to chance. Opportunities to support pupils' understanding of themselves and that of others, including from different cultures, are provided. Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities that help to develop their interests and talents.

Systems for managing the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have been overhauled. The school has invested in extensive training to improve staff knowledge and skills. Detailed SEND pathways help staff to identify pupils' needs accurately. Individual targets for pupils with SEND are precise and regularly reviewed to ensure progress is ongoing.

The school has established robust procedures for managing pupils' absence. It is seen as integral to their role in keeping pupils safe. Efforts to improve pupils' attendance are paying dividends. The number of pupils persistently absent from school is reducing. Overall attendance for all groups of pupils is rising.

Governors, trust leaders and trustees know the school well. They offer the right amount of support and challenge when needed. They are mindful of staff workload and well-being. Staff feel valued and commit wholeheartedly to the ambition of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not always have a secure grasp of subject-specific disciplinary knowledge needed to tackle activities that are more open-ended. This means that pupils are not always confident to use and apply their knowledge securely. Leaders need to strengthen this aspect of curriculums so that more pupils can gain a deeper understanding of the subjects they study and achieve more highly.
- The teaching of encoding skills is not as effective as the teaching of decoding skills within phonics lessons. This means that opportunities to support pupils' early letter formation do not meet leaders' expectations. Leaders need to strengthen this aspect of phonics teaching.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour, or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2018.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141997
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10290286
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	153
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ivan Whitfield
Headteacher	Jill Cooke
Website	www.shieldrow.durham.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 June 2018

Information about this school

- The school offers Nursery provision.
- The school provides wraparound care between 7.45am and 6pm.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, science, and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils about the quality of education and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector talked to a range of pupils and observed their behaviour in lessons and during social times.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central records; took account of the views of leaders, staff, and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open culture around safeguarding.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders and pupils, as well as the chair of the governing body and representatives from the local governing body. She also spoke with the chief executive officer of the trust, the trust director, and a member of the central trust team.
- A range of documentations provided by the school was reviewed. This included a wide range of policies, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning document and published information about pupils' performance.
- The inspector considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including free-text responses. They also took account of the responses to the staff survey and pupil survey and gathered the views of staff and pupils during the inspection.

Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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