

St Hild's College Church of England Aided Primary School, Durham

Renny's Lane, Gilesgate, Durham DH1 2HZ

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2019

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

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has developed a highly effective leadership team. Working closely together, leaders have raised standards throughout the school.
- School leaders provide high-quality support to teachers and make thorough checks on the progress made by pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching is strong and outcomes in English and mathematics are improving rapidly.
- Good teaching and well-planned learning opportunities help children to make a good start in the early years. As a result, they make strong progress and are well prepared for key stage 1.
- Governors keep a close eye on the school's work. They are well informed and are ambitious for pupils. They take their role seriously, providing very effective support and challenge to leaders.
- Teachers in all phases of the school are quick to identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind. They modify their teaching and provide support that enables the majority of pupils to make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy and value school. They work hard in lessons and behave well inside and outside their classrooms. The school supports children and their families effectively, and as a result, pupils' attendance is improving.
- Pupils benefit from a rich range of trips, visitors and events, but leadership of the broader curriculum is in the early stages of development. Pupils' knowledge and skills in some subjects are not developed sequentially.
- The impact of leaders' strategies to raise standards in reading and mathematics is not as evident in writing. The quality of pupils' writing is more variable, with smaller proportions of pupils writing at higher standards.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress that pupils make in subjects other than English and mathematics by:
 - increasing the subject expertise of middle leaders, so that they can strengthen the curriculum and provide effective support to teachers
 - ensuring that teaching extends and deepens pupils' subject skills and knowledge systematically over time
 - refining systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning in the wider curriculum so that high expectations are sustained across all subjects.
- Strengthen existing strategies to improve pupils' writing skills, so that the marked improvements and higher standards evident in their reading and mathematics are reflected in their writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has established a highly effective leadership team. Together, they have successfully addressed the weaknesses in teaching that were identified by inspectors. As a result, the quality of teaching in the school and the progress made by pupils are strong.
- The headteacher has empowered her leadership team and they have repaid her trust. They have worked closely with officers from the local authority and the diocese to improve systems of checking the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils. Consequently, leaders have a detailed knowledge of the school's performance.
- Leaders use this knowledge to provide highly effective support to staff. This has been particularly important because many of the teachers in the school are at an early stage of their careers. Staff at the school value the advice and support from leaders, and they are quick to act on it. Consequently, the quality of teaching has improved and the progress made by different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs, is improving rapidly. Current pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders have been active in their pursuit of improving standards. They have worked with staff at other schools and the local mathematics network. They have also investigated available research to develop systems of learning that best meet the needs of pupils. The resulting improvements to the teaching of English and mathematics are ensuring that increasing proportions of pupils exceed expected standards for their age. However, the progress made by pupils in writing is not yet as strong.
- Leaders use additional funding thoughtfully for pupils entitled to the pupil premium to meet their social, academic and physical needs. Improved support for families has resulted in better attendance and a reduction in the numbers of pupils missing significant amounts of their education. Well-targeted support from staff ensures that disadvantaged pupils benefit equally from the improvements to teaching as their non-disadvantaged peers.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well provided for because leaders make sure that additional funding for these pupils is spent appropriately. Leaders seek advice and training to help them plan effective support. They make thorough checks to ensure that the support is meeting pupils' needs. As a result, pupils with SEND make good progress.
- Leaders have set out clear expectations about pupils' attitudes and behaviour. These are consistently applied by staff and so the atmosphere in and around school is calm. Pupils value their learning and are supportive of each other. They eagerly take on additional responsibilities such as leading playtime activities or working for the school council.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is broad and is enriched by visits, visitors and special events. Pupils are enthusiastic about these opportunities. For example, they

told inspectors about how the 'forest school' helped them to manage risks, and how they had learned about structures by building dens. However, the sequences of learning are not consistently strong across all subjects. Where this is the case, activities do not build on pupils' prior learning, and progress is therefore inconsistent.

- The headteacher and her leadership team are extending leadership capacity within the school by equipping teachers to take on responsibility for curriculum areas. Senior leaders are training teachers to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects. However, this work is at an early stage, so checks on the quality of teaching in some subjects such as history and geography are not yet as detailed as they are in mathematics and English.

Governance of the school

- Since the previous inspection, governors have thoroughly reviewed their roles. They have worked with the local authority officers and officers from the diocese to improve the way they hold school leaders to account. This work has been highly effective; governors now have significant expertise, which they use to ensure that standards continue to rise.
- Governors know the school well. They visit the school regularly to work with school leaders. They check standards and evaluate the work of the headteacher and her leadership team. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that governors use their knowledge of the school to challenge leaders and ensure that improvement continues.
- Individual governors take on specific responsibilities. For example, they check the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and evaluate the impact of the school's work on attendance and safeguarding. These governors take their roles seriously and work closely with school leaders. Consequently, the governing body is well informed about the school's work to improve outcomes for its most vulnerable pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders provide regular training to ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. This has resulted in strong systems which ensure that any concerns about pupil safety are reported and acted on very quickly.
- Procedures for recruitment are thorough. Systematic checks are made on adults who work in or visit the school. Leaders keep good records of the actions they take to protect pupils and ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are fit for purpose.
- Leaders work effectively with external agencies to ensure that pupils are safe, inside and outside school. They have developed strong relationships with the local secondary school, ensuring consistent support for pupils throughout both schools. Where a response from external agencies is slow, leaders are persistent in following up concerns.
- Pupils make a good contribution to the strong culture of safeguarding that exists within the school. For example, pupils who are elected to be 'buddies' or play leaders ensure

that young pupils can play together at breaktimes. As one pupil told inspectors, 'Everyone has somebody to play with'.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the previous inspection because teachers have received clear guidance from leaders, who make regular and thorough checks on teaching effectiveness. Consequently, in all classes and in most subjects, pupils make good progress.
- Leaders have developed reliable assessment systems in mathematics and English that allow teachers to plan learning activities thoroughly to meet the needs of pupils. As a result, teachers are quick to identify and support pupils who are at risk of falling behind.
- Teachers create a strong culture of learning in classrooms. Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong and pupils are well supported in their learning. As one pupil told inspectors, 'Staff look after us and make learning fun.' Pupils work hard both individually and together. They are keen to answer questions and meet the high expectations of teachers. Consequently, there are high standards of presentation and handwriting.
- Pupils respond positively to teachers' advice about how to improve their work. They readily commit to making these improvements. As a result, pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning.
- The teaching of reading has strengthened considerably since the previous inspection. Teachers ensure that pupils learn the specific skills they need in order to read challenging texts. The school's rewards scheme and book review scheme motivate pupils to read regularly. The vast majority of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are enthusiastic about their reading.
- Teachers possess strong subject knowledge in mathematics. They explain new concepts clearly and develop pupils' understanding through effective questioning. Teachers also provide regular opportunities for all pupils to deepen their knowledge of mathematics by solving problems. Consequently, pupils' skills in solving these tricky problems are improving and they make strong progress in lessons.
- Teachers plan a wide range of events designed to stimulate learning. Pupils told inspectors of one such event where they had arrived at school to find police investigating a crashed 'alien spaceship'. The pupils were animated as they told inspectors about the varied learning activities they had taken part in throughout this event. One pupil told inspectors earnestly, 'You know, it's possible the aliens could still be among us.'
- Teachers develop pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills well. They teach these skills systematically, and give clear guidance so that pupils know exactly which areas to improve. However, teachers do not consistently challenge pupils to apply this knowledge to a wide range of writing opportunities. Consequently, pupils do not make such strong progress in writing as they do in mathematics and reading.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' personal development is based on the school's motto: 'We teach minds to think, hands to do and hearts to love.' Their understanding of these values is developed through assemblies and through the curriculum.
- Pupils are good advocates of this motto. They are keen to succeed in lessons, and are quick to improve their work in response to the advice of teachers. Opportunities for pupils to succeed outside their lessons are well provided for through a very wide range of activities, clubs and events such as forest school, coding club and fencing.
- Pupils' sense of social responsibility is well developed. They raise money for charities, and participate in events to raise awareness of conditions such as Down's syndrome. In every class, two pupils are elected to be 'smiles', and take responsibility for looking after pupils who are new to the school. From the early years to Year 6, pupils demonstrate consideration of others and a willingness to help those who need it.
- Pupils have a strong voice in the school. Through elections for a range of responsibilities and visits from local politicians, they are beginning to understand the democratic process. The school council meets regularly and represents the views of pupils to school leaders. School council members are justifiably proud of their impact on school decisions such as improving outdoor play equipment.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. The vast majority of parents and carers say that their children are happy and safe at school. During the inspection, a small minority of parents expressed concerns about instances of poor behaviour and bullying. However, these concerns did not reflect the views of pupils or what inspectors saw. Pupils say that instances of bullying and poor behaviour are rare. They have strong confidence that staff deal with these instances effectively.
- The curriculum offers regular opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe indoors and outdoors. Pupils are confident in how to stay safe online because they have regular lessons on this subject. Teachers use activities in the forest school to show pupils how to identify and manage risks. Pupils strongly appreciate the efforts of school leaders in ensuring that the school feels safe.
- A good range of trips, residential visits and activities contribute well to pupils' personal development and awareness of the world. Older pupils told inspectors that their residential visit had improved their 'courage, resilience and positivity'. Pupils were just as eloquent about the benefits of other personal development opportunities, such as participation in an anti-discrimination programme with Newcastle United Football Club, and learning about bicycle safety.
- Pupils are made aware of the diversity of modern Britain through their trips and visits, and through the curriculum. In lessons, pupils study a range of religions and national events such as Remembrance Day. In assemblies, pupils learn about celebrations and festivals from around the world. Pupils told inspectors of their experiences of trying Tai

Chi as part of celebrations of Chinese New Year.

- Pupils take part in a good range of activities to promote healthy lifestyles. They learn about the importance of diet, and can identify foods that are healthy and those that are not. Visits to a dental surgery help pupils learn about dental hygiene. All pupils participate in a 'daily mile', and are positive about the effects of this exercise on their health.
- Sport has a high profile at the school. Regular active participation in lessons is well supplemented by other sporting activities such as fencing, judo and wider competitive sports for boys and girls.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff have established strong routines which ensure that the school is a calm, orderly environment. Systems for recording behaviour and managing the behaviour of pupils with specific needs are strong.
- The well-attended breakfast club has an exceptionally positive atmosphere in which pupils of all ages make a good start to the school day. The behaviour of pupils during breaktimes is good because they are well supervised and show consideration to others.
- Pupils behave well in school and demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning. Approaches to managing pupils' behaviour are effective, so incidents of poor behaviour are isolated to a small number of pupils and are quickly dealt with.
- Determined action by leaders has resulted in strong improvements in attendance, which is now in line with the national average. The number of pupils who miss school too often is reducing because staff work closely with families. Pupils are punctual and ready to start school in the morning.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over time, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching together with staffing turbulence have led to variable rates of progress in key stages 1 and 2. The leadership team has turned this poor performance around. There is now a systematic approach to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics which is leading to improved outcomes for pupils.
- In 2018, the progress made by pupils in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 improved considerably compared to previous years. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age in reading and in mathematics was above average.
- The attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 1 in 2018 remained below the national average due to a legacy of inconsistent teaching. However, scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that the progress made by current pupils in key stage 1 has improved to match the strong progress seen in key stage 2.
- Over time, the proportion of key stage 1 pupils meeting the required standard in the phonics screening check has been below average. Leaders have remedied this. Observations of phonics teaching throughout the early years and key stage 1, together

with the school's own performance information, indicate that pupils now make strong progress in their understanding of phonics. Pupils who did not attain the required phonics standard in 2018 are now catching up quickly.

- Teachers ensure that pupils read regularly and widely. In school, pupils choose books that build their reading skills sequentially. Pupils have frequent opportunities to develop their vocabulary and their inference skills. As a result, the progress made by pupils in reading is strong in all phases of the school.
- Leaders ensure that mathematics lessons are well planned and build on pupils' prior knowledge. As a result, pupils make strong progress from their different starting points. Observations of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' work in key stages 1 and 2 demonstrate that pupils have a good understanding of what they have been taught. Consequently, they are confident when using their knowledge to solve problems. This is leading to increasing proportions of pupils working above the standards expected for their age.
- Improved teaching of writing is resulting in more consistent progress through the school. By the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils reaching nationally expected standards in writing is broadly average. However, the progress that pupils make in writing is not as strong as it is mathematics or in reading. Consequently, not enough pupils develop the skills required to exceed the standards expected for their age.
- In most classes, and in most subjects, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils from their starting points is good. Effective strategies to support these pupils ensure that there is little difference between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and that of their non-disadvantaged peers.
- Leaders ensure that the teaching of pupils with SEND is planned carefully and checked thoroughly. Scrutiny of pupils' work and learning activities observed by inspectors indicate that pupils with SEND make good progress that is broadly in line with that of other pupils in the school.
- In some subjects, such as history and geography, the progress made by pupils is not as strong as it is in English and mathematics. This is because work to develop these subjects is at an early stage. While pupils enjoy a good range of activities, these activities do not build systematically on pupils' prior knowledge or extend their subject-specific skills.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader, ably supported by the school leadership team, has brought about significant improvements to the quality of teaching and learning in the early years. As a result, the progress made by children from their various start points is strong.
- Communication between adults in the early years is highly effective. There is a strong, consistent approach to teaching. The early years leader has adapted the training given to teachers in key stages 1 and 2, so that staff in early years prepare children well for the next steps in their learning. Consequently, during adult-led and child-initiated activities, all children build their learning sequentially.

- The early years leader has made the improvement of children's skills in reading and mathematics a high priority. She has ensured that highly effective adult-led sessions improve children's knowledge of phonics and mathematics. Children are inspired by these sessions and develop their learning through their play. After an adult-led session about doubling, children playing in the 'fish and chip shop' ordered and were served with double fish and chips.
- In addition to high-quality adult-led sessions, children in the early years benefit from a range of well-planned activities that they can access independently. Through these activities, children successfully build their knowledge of the world and develop their understanding of reading, writing and mathematics. However, leaders recognise that opportunities for children to develop their writing in this way are not as well established as they are in reading and mathematics. As a result, children do not make such strong progress in their writing.
- Adults provide very effective support that challenges children to extend their learning. Inspectors observed examples of adults seizing opportunities and adapting their approach to accommodate children's interests. For example, in one activity some children wanted to climb a tree rather than participate in a counting activity. The supervising adult helped the children manage the risk, then asked the children to count the buds on the branches they were holding. The children were keen to oblige.
- The teaching of phonics is a strength in the early years. Staff have secure subject knowledge. They explain new learning clearly and ask questions that extend children's understanding. As a result, children readily apply their knowledge and skills when reading and writing.
- Opportunities for children to develop their knowledge and problem-solving skills in mathematics are embedded throughout the early years provision. Many children freely choose number activities when they are not working with adults. Consequently, children are well prepared for the Year 1 mathematics curriculum by the time they leave the Reception class.
- A high proportion of children enter the early years with skills that are low for their age. The early years leader has improved the accuracy of assessment. Consequently, staff are quick to identify and support children who need to catch up. In addition, through the introduction of themes such as 'superheroes' and opportunities such as forest school, the early years leader has developed the curriculum to meet the needs of all children. This has improved the progress made by all groups, particularly boys and disadvantaged children.
- The early years leader has made sure that the curriculum also provides children with plenty of opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain and diverse cultures. Children learn about health and safety through themes such as 'people who help us'. They take part in whole-school themes such as Chinese New Year, Remembrance Day and Diwali.
- Staff in early years build strong relationships with parents. Regular 'stay and play' and reading sessions allow parents to be involved with their children's learning. Parents told inspectors that they feel well informed about the progress their children make.
- The early years leader and her staff have created a safe environment for children to

learn. Arrangements for two-year-olds are appropriate. Routines are well established and there is a strong sense of mutual respect between staff and children. As a consequence, children settle quickly into the early years and develop positive attitudes. The youngest and the oldest children work well together, help each other and speak confidently to adults and visitors. By the time they reach the end of their time in early years, children are well prepared for Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	114270
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10087529

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Revd Canon Dr Bartlett
Headteacher	Alexandra Ryder
Telephone number	0191 384 7451
Website	www.st-hilds.durham.sch.uk/
Email address	sthilds@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	19–20 January 2017

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is also average.
- The school offers provision for two-year-olds on a part-time basis.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across all phases of the school, including the early years. A number of observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher, during which, inspectors looked at pupils' books and talked to pupils to evaluate the quality of their current work. Together with senior leaders, inspectors scrutinised a sample of books containing work across the curriculum. Inspectors also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors observed and spoke with pupils before school and at breaktime, and observed their behaviour and conduct around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and a group of staff. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils, a group of governors and representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies, assessment information, and records of checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors looked at records of attendance, behaviour, minutes of governing body meetings and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors took account of the 26 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 22 responses to the free-text parent survey. Inspectors also spoke with parents before school. In addition, inspectors took account of 19 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

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