

High Clarence Primary School

Port Clarence Road, Middlesbrough TS2 1SY

Inspection dates

12–13 February 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been considerably below the national average. Although there are improvements in pupils' progress since the last inspection, most pupils are still working below or well below age-related expectations.
- The quality of direction that lower-ability pupils receive and the expectations of what they can achieve vary. The difference between these pupils' attainment and age-related expectations is not diminishing quickly enough.
- In mathematics, pupils' use of number strategies has improved, but pupils have limited opportunities to apply their skills to reasoning and problem-solving tasks.
- While improving, teaching and learning in writing are not consistently good.
- Leaders' plans for improvement are not explicit enough about what actions need to be taken to secure improvement, when they will take place, and how leaders will know if they have been successful.
- Strategies to check actions being taken for improvement need refinement. They are not focused tightly enough on the aspects of pupils' progress and achievement that most need improvement and are not consistently evaluative.
- Leaders have reorganised the early years to give children a stronger start. It is early days. Learning across the wider curriculum has improved, but there is not enough direction and challenge in basic skills, particularly reading and writing, to ensure that older children make strong progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's dedication to the school and local community is steadfast. Her care for those around her means that she is well respected in school and beyond. Staff morale is high.
- Responsibilities for safeguarding are taken very seriously. Pupils' welfare is given high priority and they flourish socially and emotionally as a result.
- Pupils behave well because they understand what is expected of them and know that it is important to treat each other with kindness.
- New systems and rigour around improving pupils' attendance are paying off. Attendance has improved and is similar to the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics so that a higher proportion reach at least expected standards by:
 - giving lower-ability pupils precise and frequent direction, particularly in reading and writing, so that they catch up quickly
 - ensuring that pupils have plenty of opportunities to apply their number skills in mathematics to reasoning and problem-solving activities
 - making sure teachers model writing effectively and that pupils of all abilities frequently practise their writing skills across the curriculum
 - using high-quality texts and improved engagement in reading to deepen pupils' knowledge and use of vocabulary.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - refining plans for school improvement so that everyone is clear about exactly where any aspects of pupils' low achievement lies
 - using a wide range of strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' actions to improve standards
 - ensuring that governors use probing questioning, not only to clarify recent improvements in pupils' progress, but also to check if pupils' achievement is good or better.
- Increase the proportion of pupils who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception by:
 - adapting the early years provision to ensure that it provides challenge for children of all abilities and ages
 - balancing the new immersive, child-centred learning approach with clear teacher direction, for example in writing
 - continuing to ensure that phonics teaching is lively, delivered frequently and supports children in applying the sounds they have learned straight into writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the inspection in March 2018, and after a period of particularly low pupil attainment, leaders have taken decisive action to improve the progress pupils make over their time in school. However, it is early days, and at least half of the pupils are not working at or above age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are generally making better progress, but are not catching up quickly enough.
- The headteacher has developed commendable links with parents, carers and the local community over many years. She is held in high esteem and trusted by the school and local community. She has worked effectively with the staff team to create a nurturing and vibrant environment where pupils feel safe and well cared for.
- Leaders are receptive to advice. They have responded positively to the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection. For example, the training and development for all staff who teach phonics, and consistency in delivery of phonics lessons, have led to more pupils learning to read with accuracy and fluency. However, leaders' own identification of teaching and learning that needs improvement, and their evaluations of the actions taken, are not precise enough.
- Senior and subject leaders willingly engage in professional development opportunities and their own subject knowledge has improved as a result. However, although there is evidence of their intended improvement in their own classes, the strategies they highlight are not consistently applied across the school.
- In mathematics, leaders have brought about improvement in the use of practical resources and activities to develop pupil's knowledge and confidence in times tables. However, they have not ensured that all staff are providing opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills to reason and solve problems.
- Leaders have worked with the local authority to improve the quality of teaching and learning in writing. Improvement can be seen in current pupils' writing, particularly at the end of key stage 1. However, leaders recognise that there is more to do to ensure that there is consistency in effective modelling by teachers, clear direction to pupils in building up skills for different types of writing and direction in how to edit and improve written work.
- Leaders have established thorough data systems to help them to check the progress that pupils are making. However, a very positive view of recent improvement, from leaders at all levels, has clouded the continued need for urgency in improving standards.
- Leaders have designed the curriculum to broaden pupils' experiences across a range of subjects. They use visits and visitors successfully to support topic-based learning. Carefully planned activities help pupils to remember and deepen their knowledge in different subjects, such as science.
- An emphasis on pupils knowing more about their local environment and the world beyond supports pupils in becoming good community citizens. Lessons, assemblies and visits are used to support pupils' learning about other religions and beliefs. Pupils

spoken to by the inspector give a clear indication of leaders' effective work to promote good moral values.

- Leaders' attention to pupils' safety and well-being is a strength. Knowing that the school is geographically isolated, leaders have been proactive in developing wider relationships with the local authority and other schools in the cluster. They are receptive to ideas for improvement and support staff in developing their own skills and observing good practice beyond the school.
- Leaders use most of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to provide teaching assistant support to individuals and small groups. For SEND pupils, this additional support, married with effective work with external agencies and parents, ensures that pupils' emotional and social needs are very well met. Their academic progress is more variable across the school, just as it is for other pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the headteacher and her team. They have positive relationships with staff at the school, which enable any concerns to be quickly and effectively addressed. The headteacher describes the school as 'an inner-city village' and parents feel that the school is the hub of their community.

Governance of the school

- Governors understand the context of the school and know how important it is for leaders to provide a safe, secure and happy environment, which they can demonstrate they do well. They have a good understanding of how additional funding is spent, particularly being clear about how it is used effectively to support vulnerable pupils in their social, emotional and behavioural development.
- The headteacher provides the governing body with comprehensive information about safeguarding, staff development, events and activities across the curriculum and pupils' progress. However, the weaker aspects of pupils' attainment and progress are not precisely identified on the school improvement plan. Consequently, the questions and checks that governors make are centred on improvements in the year and not so clearly on the school's overall effectiveness.
- Recently appointed governors have a good understanding of how to use national information to evaluate effectively against. Leaders agree that this will help governors hone their skills in gathering the evidence needed to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the school, particularly in relation to pupils' achievement and progress over their time in school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher has an excellent knowledge of the local community. She understands that the community is close-knit, but isolated. She is diligent in identifying and addressing potential pupil vulnerabilities. She seeks out all opportunities possible to involve external agencies in supporting work to teach pupils how to keep safe.
- Leaders have ensured that everyone is well trained to recognise and report potential safeguarding concerns. Staff understand these procedures well. A number of staff have

been trained as designated safeguarding leaders. The systems for the recruitment of staff are thorough and well checked. The headteacher and school business manager praise the local authority's clear and effective direction in safeguarding procedures, their frequent update sessions and the strong message to disseminate information effectively to staff and governors.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection, but are not yet good enough to ensure that pupils consistently make strong progress and achieve well.
- Recent work to address the areas highlighted for improvement at the last inspection has included professional development and training for staff. Staff have embraced the opportunity to develop their own knowledge and skills. Teaching is improving, but new strategies are not consistently applied throughout the school. The challenge pupils are given, and the expectations of what they can achieve, are particularly varied. When pupils are being supported directly by the teacher, these aspects are stronger. There are still too many areas where pupils' progress is not rapid enough to help them reach age-related expectations.
- Staff training and clear direction in phonics teaching, including consistency in the delivery of one phonics programme, have resulted in pupils getting off to a better start in reading. Teachers and teaching assistants generally model sounds well. They use lively routines and strategies to develop pupils' skills and confidence in decoding words. Expectations of what lower-ability pupils can do are not always as high. These pupils do not have as many opportunities to apply the sounds they have learned straight into writing, in phonics sessions and across the curriculum. As a result, they make slower progress. Reading books are matched well to pupils' abilities, but lower-ability pupils do not all have frequent opportunities to read aloud, so lack confidence and struggle to read with fluency.
- The school's work to engage pupils in reading more widely and often is best celebrated when talking to pupils about reading. Nearly all pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they enjoyed reading, even if they do find it 'a bit difficult'. Older pupils were keen to talk about the new books they have in their classrooms and the books they select from the library bus. Leaders rightly identify that they need to widen the range of high-quality texts they are using to continue to develop pupils' knowledge and accurate use of more challenging vocabulary.
- New approaches to the teaching of writing have started to have a positive effect on the progress pupils make in this subject. For example, pupils' work in some classes shows evidence of effective modelling by teachers, clear progression of skills and pupils' understanding of how to improve their work. However, different strategies across classes and variability in the opportunities pupils have to test out their writing skills affects the pace of progress that pupils, and particularly boys, make.
- Improvement in the use of practical resources to support learning has had a positive effect on pupils' understanding in mathematics. Coupled with strategies to embed pupils' knowledge of times tables, this has improved pupils' confidence and speed in calculations. However, pupils do not have many opportunities to test out these skills in

practical, problem-solving activities, so do not deepen their understanding of mathematics and how it can be applied to real-life situations.

- The staff team show dedication to giving pupils curriculum opportunities that will extend their experiences, knowledge and understanding. Visits and visitors are planned carefully to deepen pupils' knowledge. Recently, teachers have linked texts carefully to curriculum work so that pupils can make connections in their learning across subjects. Older pupils have retained information about the First World War well, due to the well-planned visits, links with the local community, and books and activities used to support this learning. They were inspired to produce some of their best examples of written work during this project.
- A variety of homework tasks are set by teachers to support learning in basic skills and to engage pupils and their families in work across the curriculum. Parents and pupils say that they like the variety in these purposeful tasks.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good and a strength of the school. Excellent relationships between staff, pupil, parents and the community, strengthened over many years, have created a culture of mutual respect and care for each other.
- The schools' good knowledge of families helps them to identify where any further support may be needed. Leaders have good partnerships with a wide range of other professionals that they engage with to support pupils and their families. Knowing the challenges for the community in accessing other services, staff go the extra mile to ensure that families access the help and advice they need.
- Parents feel well informed about their children's achievements in school. They are keen to attend the events the school organises. They value the school's dedication to whole-family support and engage in a variety of activities offered. For example, during the inspection, several parents were taking part in a family cooking session.
- The school-run breakfast club, supported by a national business, provides a positive start to the day.
- Learning about local topics and news items features highly in the curriculum, which develops pupils' knowledge of the benefits and challenges of the world around them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and are proud of their school. They are polite to each other and quick to respond to adults' requests. They speak kindly about each other and know how important it is to listen to each other's views.
- Leaders have comprehensive strategies to promote good behaviour and to support and record any behaviour that is not as good as they want it to be. An emphasis on warm praise and celebration motivates pupils to behave well.

- Leaders have taken effective action to address and improve pupils' attendance, which has been historically lower than the national average. The school business manager and consultant education officer have an excellent understanding of which pupils have been absent and why. They have put effective systems in place which, supported by their good relationships with families, have secured improvement. These balance clear direction in the need for improvement with celebration when attendance improves.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes require improvement. Over time, the standards that pupils achieve have been well below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. More recent direct work to improve pupil's outcomes has resulted in some gains in current pupils' progress, but, nevertheless, high proportions of pupils are still working below age-related expectations.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards at the end of key stage 1 has been below the national average for at least three years. The 2018 results put the school in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. Although there is still considerable variation in the quality of key stage 1 pupils' work, and most pupils are working below age-related expectations, the work of current Year 2 pupils shows improvement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the phonics standard at the end of Year 1 has been consistently below the national average. However, training and resulting consistency in better teaching of phonics is leading to gains in current pupils' learning.
- Over time, pupils' attainment at the expected standards at the end of key stage 2 has been well below the national average, particularly in reading and writing. Over a three-year period, pupils' reading attainment has been in the bottom 10% of schools. Recent work to address low standards has resulted in an improvement in current pupils' progress overall, although well over half of the pupils across the school are still working below age-related expectations in reading and writing.
- Pupils in receipt of the pupil premium funding account for over half of the pupils in the school. Their progress shows similar variation to that of other pupils in the school.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress in their social, emotional and behavioural development due to the support they receive in school and through the school's effective work with external agencies. This prepares them well to learn. Their progress in reading, writing and mathematics is more varied from their different starting points.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- A substantially lower proportion of children than seen nationally have reached a good level of development by the time they leave Reception over recent years. This has meant children have left Reception unprepared for the challenges of the Year 1 curriculum.
- Leaders have re-evaluated their philosophy for teaching in the early years to address children's low standards at the end of Reception. Children's progress overall in Nursery has improved as a result, as has Nursery and Reception children's progress in physical

development and mathematics. However, the progress that Reception children make in reading and writing is not as strong and many children lack confidence in these areas.

- The indoor and outdoor learning areas have been substantially redesigned with clear vision for an immersive learning experience. The environment is inviting and well cared for. Displays promote children's basic skills. Resources and activities are well planned to help children make the transition from home to school life. Nursery children make good progress from their lower than typical starting points. However, areas of learning do not promote and challenge older children's basic skills development well enough.
- Children spend a high proportion of the day immersed in child-initiated learning. When adults intervene, learning moves forward. However, the resources and activities in the setting do not give Reception children enough opportunities to practise and deepen their learning, particularly in writing. They choose to spend much of their time in other areas of learning. Some clear direction is given to develop basic skills, such as in discrete phonics sessions, but it is not enough to prepare children well to be confident, successful readers and writers. For example, children's engagement in opportunities to practise their writing skills is limited.
- All children cooperate well with each other and sustain concentration in activities. Positive relationships between staff and children are a strength of the early years provision. Adults promote good behaviour and children respond well to their direction.
- Safeguarding procedures are well understood by staff. Adults recognise where children and their families may be vulnerable and put in a range of support, directing to other agencies when appropriate.
- Relationships with parents get off to a great start in the early years. Home visits, sessions in school and regular informal discussions make families feel welcome and part of the school community.

School details

Unique reference number	111523
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10054369

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

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	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann McCoy
Headteacher	Jean Orridge
Telephone number	01642 561237
Website	www.highclarence.stockton.sch.uk
Email address	admin@sbcschools.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2018

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium funding is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan for SEND is lower than the national average.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The early years consists of a Nursery and a Reception class.
- The school runs a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector met regularly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Meetings were also held with the early years leader, the lead teachers for English, mathematics and pupils with SEND, and curriculum leaders. The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair, and representatives from the local authority.
- The inspector observed lessons across a range of subjects in all classes. Many of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- During visits to lessons, the inspector spoke with pupils and looked at their work to find out more about how well they are learning.
- Meetings were held with pupils and the inspector talked informally with pupils around the school. She listened to pupils read and talked with them about reading. She observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' joint improvement plan and self-evaluation, and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning. The inspector also reviewed the minutes of meetings of the local governing body and information relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- The inspector met with parents and considered the nine responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. She considered the 12 staff responses and the six pupils' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Kate Rowley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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