

Inspection of Hamsterley Primary School

Hamsterley, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL13 3QF

Inspection dates:	8 and 9 July 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Hamsterley Primary School are welcoming, polite and friendly. Through the school's carefully crafted, nurturing environment, pupils blossom as individuals. Happiness radiates throughout the school. Relationships between all members of the school community are highly positive and warm. Not only are pupils safe, but they also have a very well-developed understanding of how to stay safe, both online and in the community.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils enjoy lessons and can recall their recent learning well. However, some pupils do not achieve as highly as they could. This inhibits their readiness for the next stage of their education.

Pupils' conduct is calm and orderly. Pupils understand the behaviour systems in school. Occasionally, some pupils have difficulty in meeting the school's high expectations for their attitudes to learning. Where this is the case, staff use the positive relationships that exist to address these issues effectively.

Parents and carers are very positive about the school. They particularly value the school's supportive ethos. Staff engage well with parents. Communication between school and parents is effective. This promotes the sense of 'family' that is evident at Hamsterley Primary School.

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

Children and pupils at the early stages of learning to read become increasingly confident and fluent readers over time. Those who may fall behind get support to help them to catch up. However, staff do not identify errors or misconceptions in reading and phonics lessons with enough accuracy or consistency. As a result, mistakes and misunderstandings become embedded and pupils' reading does not develop as well as it could.

Across the wider curriculum, pupils enjoy their lessons. They have an appropriate recall of their learning. For example, pupils talk with understanding about the Minoan or Hellenistic periods in Ancient Greece. They understand the chronology of these time periods. Younger pupils confidently name the four countries of the United Kingdom, along with their capital cities. Pupils accurately use mathematical skills in their science lessons. For example, when graphing the results of a scientific investigation. However, in some areas of the wider curriculum, teaching does not ensure that subject knowledge is learned securely enough. Misconceptions are not addressed with enough consistency. As a result, pupils do not deepen their knowledge well enough over time.

Children in the early years benefit from a well-planned curriculum. It gives them the opportunities they need to develop an inquisitive approach to learning. There is a clear focus on language and vocabulary. Children then use this language and vocabulary in conversation and in their wider play. For example, children discuss how tigers and leopards have stripes and spots that help them to 'camouflage'. They understand the difference between mammals and other animals that lay eggs. Children develop an appropriate awareness of letter sounds to help them with their early reading skills.

Staff are swift to identify pupils' needs. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Support is carefully tailored to help these pupils succeed. As a result, pupils with SEND make positive progress.

Behaviour at Hamsterley Primary is positive. Older pupils act as role models for their younger peers. They see themselves as being there to help. Pupils are caring and supportive to others. The school has overseen significant improvements in pupils' attendance. Pupils love to come to school. Their attendance now is positive.

There is some significant strength in aspects of pupils' wider development at the school. Pupils demonstrate a secure sense of equality, equity and respect for difference, including for those with different religions or beliefs. They are tolerant, respectful and have a strong sense of empathy for others. Their moral compass is well developed. Pupils' understanding of British values, protected characteristics and democracy is also excellent. For example, pupils talk eloquently about democracy, explaining the differences between oligarchy, direct democracy and representative democracy.

Leaders are focused on improving the quality of education that the school provides. They have addressed the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection. However, further work is needed to secure greater consistency in the quality of education across the school. Governors receive a wealth of information about the school. They use this to hold leaders to account. Staff are well supported, particularly for their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of phonics teaching, misconceptions and errors in pupils' reading are not picked up with sufficient accuracy. This impacts on pupils' reading as gaps in their learning are not addressed swiftly enough. The school should ensure that staff identify and address errors in pupils' reading effectively.
- At times, teaching does not enable pupils to develop their knowledge in some subjects in the wider curriculum well enough. Gaps in learning are not identified and pupils learn to a lesser depth than they do in other subjects. The school should ensure that teaching enables pupils to acquire a deep base of knowledge across all subjects.

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	114053
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10379347
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mark den Hollander
Headteacher	Sarah Hodgkinson (Executive headteacher)
Website	www.hamsterley.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 February 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Hamsterley Primary School joined the Durham Dales Federation in September 2023.
- There have been some changes in staffing since the previous inspection.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. Children in Reception and pupils in key stage 1 are taught in one class. Pupils in key stage 2 are taught in another class.
- Wrap-around childcare operates on site under the management of the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the executive deputy headteacher, some other school staff, members of the local governing body and a senior leadership adviser from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector also looked at samples of pupils' work from English, science, art and design and design and technology.
- An inspector listened to some children from Reception and some pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- An inspector met with the school's special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. He evaluated the plans and provision for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with same-sex groups of older pupils to discuss their wider development.
- Inspectors observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- An inspector spoke to some parents at the start and end of the school day.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Richard Beadnall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Emma Robertson

Ofsted Inspector

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