

# Escomb Primary School

**Address:** Three Lane Ends, Escomb, Bishop Auckland, County Durham, DL14 7SR

**Unique reference number (URN):** 114103

## Inspection report: 31 March 2026

|                    |                                                                                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Exceptional        |                                                                                   |
| Strong standard    |                                                                                   |
| Expected standard  |  |
| Needs attention    |                                                                                   |
| Urgent improvement |                                                                                   |

### **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

### **How we evaluate safeguarding**

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

## Expected standard

### Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress well across the curriculum. They build on their secure foundations from early years. Pupils go on to develop their key knowledge across all areas of the curriculum. Where needed, a small number of pupils benefit from extra help to catch up with their peers. However, a minority of pupils do not develop their writing skills as quickly as they could.

Pupils achieve well in national tests at the expected standard. However, a minority of pupils do not achieve as highly as they could. Leaders are addressing this, but this work is in its early stages. However, overall pupils are well prepared for their next steps. They become confident learners and communicators. Pupils have the curriculum knowledge and skills they need to confidently move on to secondary school.

### Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders closely monitor the attendance of all pupils. They intervene quickly and provide support to pupils and their families when attendance is declining. Leaders support pupils to break down any barriers that impact their attendance. Most pupils attend school regularly because they enjoy going to school. However, a small minority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are absent more than they should be. Leaders are taking effective action to address this.

Leaders have established a calm, welcoming and purposeful learning environment. Pupils behave well in their lessons and during social times. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare. Pupils are polite and kind to others. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively. Pupils who need some extra help to manage their emotions receive it. Staff support pupils to develop strategies to help them to regulate independently. Expectations for behaviour are made clear and established from the early years. Staff understand the behaviour policy and apply it well. Pupils benefit from the warm, caring approach of staff. Pupils are keen to learn and have positive attitudes towards their learning. They are proud of their achievements and value their rewards.

### Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders understand where there are strengths and areas for improvement across the curriculum. The curriculum is generally well sequenced so that pupils secure the important knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics and build on their learning over time. Improvements that leaders have made are having a positive impact. For example, changes made to the mathematics curriculum mean that pupils secure key knowledge quickly. Teachers have the subject knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum well. They generally understand what their pupils already know and what needs to be developed next. However, in some subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics, this is variable. At times, teachers move some pupils on to new content before they have secured the

knowledge they need to make sense of this. Teachers use a range of approaches that ensure pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities fully access the curriculum.

Pupils learn to read quickly. When they extra help they receive it in a timely way. Older pupils develop and extend their vocabulary and use it well. Pupils learn to write accurately by the end of their time at the school. However, some teachers do not consistently address errors in pupils' writing as quickly as they could, so a minority of pupils continue to make the same mistakes.

## Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a suitable curriculum in the early years provision. It supports children to progress in the key areas of development. Children benefit from high quality interactions in the early years provision. They are well supported to develop their communication and language skills. Children learn how to interact with other children. They enjoy playing together. Reading is a priority in early years. Children learn how to read from the earliest point. By the end of Reception, most children have a secure knowledge of phonics. Nursery-aged children are well supported to develop their gross and fine motor skills. Children start to learn how to write when they are ready to do so. Writing is generally taught well. Staff carefully model letter formation. However, occasionally staff do not correct errors quickly enough, so a minority of children continue to make the same mistakes in their writing.

Leaders check the progress of children in a timely way. They work in partnership with parents, carers and wider professionals when needed to make sure all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have the support they need. Children are well prepared for their transition into key stage 1.

## Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders know their pupils well. They accurately identify and assess their needs. Leaders make suitable adjustments where needed to make sure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn alongside their peers. Leaders engage with families and external professionals to shape support for pupils. Leaders make sure that staff have the training they need to best support pupils in class and during social times.

When pupils, particularly those with SEND, need some extra help they receive it in a timely manner. Teachers and teaching assistants understand the needs of their pupils and make sure they have everything they need to succeed. There are a range of interventions available to pupils to reduce barriers to learning and to support wellbeing. Some pupils benefit from the use of regulation circuits, which are positioned around the school. Other pupils benefit from accessing bespoke spaces within the school that help them to regulate their emotions. Leaders use additional funding to make sure all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those known to social care, can access all of the opportunities and experiences that the school offers.

## Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. They have taken appropriate steps to target priority areas for improvement since their previous inspection. Leaders have improved the curriculum and teaching of mathematics. They have also strengthened the provision for reading. Leaders have supported staff to develop effective teaching techniques that support all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps pupils to progress well in their learning. Leaders continue to work closely with the local authority to further strengthen aspects of the school. Leaders make decisions in the best interests of pupils.

Governors have undertaken appropriate training to improve their knowledge and skills. They know the school well. Governors are passionate about the school and what pupils can achieve. They regularly monitor the work of leaders, providing suitable challenge and support to strengthen the school.

Leaders make sure staff access a high-quality professional learning programme to build on their expertise. Staff value their training opportunities and it is clear how it is improving teaching across the school. Leaders care about staff and their wellbeing. They are conscious of workload. Staff appreciate the actions that leaders take to support them. They are proud to work at this school.

## Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pupils benefit from a well-sequenced personal development programme. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. They learn how to maintain their physical and mental health. Pupils know how to be a good friend and person. They support others who may need a little extra help.

Pupils are respectful towards the beliefs and values of others. They enjoy opportunities to take part in class discussions and explore ethical issues. Pupils learn about their local heritage through visits to Auckland Castle and the mining art gallery. They participate in local river conservation projects. Older pupils develop their team building skills through an outdoor education residential visit.

There are a range of clubs and activities to support all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps to develop their talents and hobbies. They enjoy taking part in 'Rock Steady' club, where they learn to play bass guitar, keyboard and drums. Pupils are proud to represent the school at sporting events and tournaments. The girls football team are looking forward to competing in the 'world cup' with other local schools. Pupils have opportunities to work with local artists. Recently, the whole school created a mural which captures artwork that represents the local community.

Pupils value opportunities to become leaders in school. They learn about democracy through the student council. Pupils have a voice in shaping the provision. They are passionate about being 'green' and 'digital' leaders. Older pupils are role models for younger peers. They are buddies for children in early years. These pupils play with and support the

younger children during social times. Pupils represent the school and support the local community. They read and play board games with residents of the local care home. Pupils develop their confidence and resilience through these experiences. They are well prepared for their next steps.

## **What it's like to be a pupil at this school**

Pupils are safe and happy at Escomb Primary School. They are well cared for and have positive relationships with staff. Pupils are polite and kind to each other. They conduct themselves well in lessons and during social times. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively. Pupils enjoy going to school and most attend regularly. However, a small minority of pupils are absent too often.

Pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum that enables them to learn more over time. Children in the early years secure their foundations in preparation for key stage 1. Pupils go on to gain the skills they need for their next steps. Pupils become confident readers and communicators. However, a minority of pupils do not develop their writing skills as quickly as they could. Pupils enjoy exploring different topics across the curriculum. Pupils typically achieve well. However, a small number of pupils would benefit from more time to secure their knowledge before they move on to the next topic. Pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from effective support in school.

All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, access a wide range of activities and clubs tailored to their interests. They can learn to play musical instruments, such as the violin. Pupils try a range of sports, including curling, judo and handball. They experience visits to museums, the local church and theatres. Pupils particularly enjoy their annual visit to watch a pantomime.

Pupil leaders are role models for younger pupils. The 'belonging group' supports pupils to feel included in the school community. The school council shapes the work of leaders. They make sure the voices of pupils are heard and organise events to raise funds for new equipment. Older pupils explore different careers and build their aspirations for the future. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

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## **Next steps**

- Leaders should ensure the provision for developing pupils writing skills, including handwriting and spelling, is highly effective and embedded across all subjects and phases.
- Leaders should ensure that the teaching of the curriculum, particularly across foundation subjects, effectively secures pupils knowledge before moving on to new content.
- Leaders should ensure pupils are supported to achieve at the highest levels at the end of key stage 2, increasing the number of pupils who reach the higher standard or greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Leaders should ensure their actions continue to reduce barriers to attendance, reducing persistent absence for all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
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## About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Jennifer Tremewan.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, senior leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Emma Woodhouse

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### Lead inspector:

Nikki Heron, His Majesty's Inspector

### Team inspectors:

Stephanie Innes-Taylor, His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Richardson, Ofsted Inspector

## Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 31 March 2026

## School and pupil context

### Total pupils

**165**

Below average

## What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

## School capacity

**210**

Below average

## What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

## Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

**13.33%**

Below average

## What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

## Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

**3.64%**

Close to average

## What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

## Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

**15.76%**

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 61%         | 61%              | Close to average               |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | 57%         | 62%              | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 69%         | 61%              | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 57%         | 60%              | Close to average               |

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading



The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 76%         | 74%              | Close to average               |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | 79%         | 75%              | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 85%         | 74%              | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 67%         | 73%              | Close to average               |

**Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 83%         | 72%              | Above                          |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | 82%         | 72%              | Above                          |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 85%         | 72%              | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 83%         | 71%              | Above                          |

**Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 74%         | 73%              | Close to average               |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | 68%         | 74%              | Close to average               |
| 2023/24 (final)       | 85%         | 73%              | Above                          |
| 2022/23 (final)       | 70%         | 73%              | Close to average               |

**Disadvantaged pupils' performance**

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

**Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 45%         | 46%              | Close to average               |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 47%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 46%              | S                              |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 44%              | S                              |

**Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

| Year                  | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 55%         | 62%              | Below                          |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 63%              | S                              |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 62%              | S                              |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 60%              | S                              |

**Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

| Year                         | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 91%         | 59%              | Above                          |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | S           | 59%              | S                              |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | S           | 58%              | S                              |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | S           | 58%              | S                              |

## Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

| Year                         | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Latest 3 year average</b> | 55%         | 60%              | Close to average               |
| <b>2024/25 (revised)</b>     | S           | 61%              | S                              |
| <b>2023/24 (final)</b>       | S           | 59%              | S                              |
| <b>2022/23 (final)</b>       | S           | 59%              | S                              |

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

## Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

## Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

| Year                  | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 45%         | 68%                              | -22 pp                  |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 69%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 67%                              | S                       |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 66%                              | S                       |

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

| Year                  | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 55%         | 80%                              | -25 pp                  |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 81%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 80%                              | S                       |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 78%                              | S                       |

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

| Year                  | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 91%         | 78%                              | 13 pp                   |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 78%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 78%                              | S                       |

| Year            | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2022/23 (final) | S           | 77%                              | S                       |

### Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

| Year                  | This school | National non-disadvantaged score | School disadvantage gap |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Latest 3 year average | 55%         | 80%                              | -25 pp                  |
| 2024/25 (revised)     | S           | 81%                              | S                       |
| 2023/24 (final)       | S           | 79%                              | S                       |
| 2022/23 (final)       | S           | 79%                              | S                       |

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

## Absence

### Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

| Year             | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (2 term) | 4.1%        | 5.2%             | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 5.2%        | 5.5%             | Close to average               |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 4.9%        | 5.9%             | Below                          |

### Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

| Year             | This school | National average | Compared with national average |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2024/25 (2 term) | 8.7%        | 13.3%            | Below                          |
| 2023/24 (3 term) | 8.1%        | 14.6%            | Below                          |
| 2022/23 (3 term) | 8.0%        | 16.2%            | Below                          |

## Our grades explained

### Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

### Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

### Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

### Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

### Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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