

Dene House Primary School

Manor Way, Peterlee, County Durham SR8 5RL

Inspection dates

20–21 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not Previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Improvements in the quality of teaching, identified by leaders as being needed, have been hampered by changes in leadership. The Trust has been quick to respond, supporting the school by appointing two interim headteachers. To date, they have had insufficient time to address all the weaknesses in teaching.
- Although governors have a general understanding of the school’s weaknesses, they do not fully hold leaders to account for the impact of pupil premium funding on disadvantaged pupils’ outcomes.
- The school system for tracking pupils’ progress is not used effectively. Governors and subject leaders do not have a clear understanding of how well groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils, are achieving from one key stage to the next.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent; not all teachers have high expectations of what pupils could achieve. Too few pupils make fast progress to help them catch up from low starting points to where they need to be or help them achieve higher standards. There is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils.
- The teaching of mathematics is not secure. Lessons are not planned so that pupils extend the skills they need to learn and deepen their understanding of the subject.
- Pupils said that they enjoy reading and have good strategies for decoding words. Even so, older pupils struggle with understanding some unfamiliar vocabulary or discussing a text in any real depth.
- In lessons, pupils rely too much on the teacher for direction. They do not have the self-help skills to ensure that they are effective learners and time is not wasted.

The school has the following strengths

- This is a caring school and is effective in supporting the welfare of its pupils and their families. Safeguarding procedures are robust and pupils said that they feel safe.
- The provision in the early years gets the children off to a good start and prepares them well for key stage 1.
- The support for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is good and this ensures that these pupils make good progress.
- Pupils show respect for each other and adults in school. They conduct themselves well around the school and in the playground.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better to raise pupils' attainment by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils, particularly the most able, can achieve
 - ensuring that pupils develop the skills to be independent and self-assured learners
 - ensuring that assessment is used to plan lessons in mathematics so that work is pitched at the right level and pupils are given work which deepens their understanding
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to explain their reasoning in reading and mathematics
 - helping pupils to acquire a wider vocabulary so they understand words they are reading
 - developing pupils' comprehension skills so that they can read, understand and talk about a text in depth.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - swiftly addressing the weaknesses in teaching
 - ensuring that systems for assessing pupils' progress and attainment give an accurate view of where pupils are in relation to their starting points
 - holding subject leaders fully to account for evaluating the impact on pupils' achievement when monitoring the effectiveness of their actions
 - ensuring that governors evaluate the impact of the pupil premium funding based on pupils' progress over time.

An external review of the use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The acting headteacher, well supported by an associated headteacher, has a clear vision of the quality of education that pupils at Dene House deserve. This vision is clearly shared by staff. Despite turbulence in leadership, staff morale is strong and reflects the commitment of staff to school improvement. While some improvements, for example in early years, are already having an impact, there remain too many weaknesses in the quality of teaching throughout the school to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they could.
- Professional development has been used to support teachers' practice. There are clear systems in place to support weaker teaching, but teaching is inconsistent; teachers do not encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils have not been taught the strategies to resolve problems, try something out or correct their own mistakes without resorting to an adult, and this is impeding their progress.
- The school's tracking system of pupils' progress and attainment is not used well to assess how pupils are achieving from one stage to another. Too much focus has been on short-term progress, and leaders and governors do not have a strategic view of how well pupils are doing over time. This has resulted in weak achievement particularly in key stage 2, where there has been too much slippage due to weak teaching at various stages in a pupil's schooling.
- Leaders have used a significant proportion of the pupil premium funding to provide pastoral support for disadvantaged pupils. This has helped improve the attendance of these pupils and provide equal opportunities to those of their peers to participate in extra-curricular activities. The impact of additional learning support for disadvantaged pupils has varied according to the quality of teaching they receive. Rates of progress are now similar to those of their peers, but these pupils are still catching up where they have gaps in their learning.
- Subject leaders, some new to the post, are keen to fulfil their roles. Some leaders lack the insight into how well groups of pupils are doing as a result of changes they have made to improve the quality of teaching in their subject of responsibility.
- The management of teacher performance has not been sufficiently rigorous. In particular, subject leaders have not been held fully to account for standards attained in their subjects. Rewards for teachers are not clearly linked to successes in pupil achievement.
- The Trust has conducted regular school reviews, and leaders and governors do not shy away from scrutinising the school's own effectiveness. Following the most recent school review, the school development plan now correctly identifies the areas that need addressing, but changes in leadership have hindered progression of these improvements.
- Recent changes in the teaching of mathematics are starting to make a difference. Pupils are securely building on their basic understanding of number and applying their skills to problem-solving questions. However, pupils are not mastering a deeper understanding of the subject, and this is holding back the most able pupils.

- The school has introduced several initiatives to improve the teaching of reading. Strategies to help pupils learn the sounds that letters make has yet to have a positive impact on the outcomes of Year 1 pupils in the phonic screening check; outcomes still remain below the national average.
- The school's promotion of reading and the practice of inviting authors into school have developed pupils' enjoyment of reading. These are having a positive impact on improving the reading skills of pupils in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2. There is still a legacy of underachievement for the oldest pupils who have a limited understanding of unfamiliar words and lack confidence to discuss a text in depth.
- The spiritual and moral development of pupils is effectively promoted through assemblies and lessons. Pupils expressed an enthusiastic appreciation of art and the work of various artists as well as music. Pupils have a secure understanding about diversity and recognise the rights of others. Pupils' understanding of different religions is more limited.
- Pupils' understanding of British values, democracy and the rule of law is demonstrated in the context of the school. The school council reflects the democratic election of representatives, and pupils understand the need to follow the school rules and appreciate the consequences if they do not. Mutual respect and tolerance are understood by pupils.
- The school's curriculum provides enjoyment and enrichment. Work in books shows that pupils experience a good range of subjects. The primary school physical education (PE) and sports funding is used well to provide greater opportunities for pupils to access a wider range of sports. This is reflected in pupils' enthusiasm for PE and sports. Participation in the local schools' partnership ensures that high-quality training is provided for the staff. The funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used effectively to ensure that they receive good support for their welfare needs and academic learning. Leaders with responsibility for managing their provision track the progress these pupils make, and intervention is well matched to ensure that these pupils make good progress and their needs are well met.

Governance of the school

- A recently appointed chair of governors and other new governors bring to the governing body a sharp focus and commitment to addressing weaknesses. Governors have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in holding the school to account. They have an overview about the quality of teaching and learning and understand that standards are not yet good enough.
- They are prepared to challenge the headteacher but have not so far been fully effective in speeding up the rate of improvements in the quality of teaching so that pupils achieve as well as they should.
- There is a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school, and governors have directed funding to supporting these pupils. These pupils make progress that is similar to that of their peers but still not as good as it should be when compared to the progress of all pupils nationally. Governors do not have accurate information to evaluate the impact of the pupil premium funding when assessing how well these pupils are doing from one key stage to the next.

- Governors understand that pupil progress should be the main driver when awarding pay increases and holding leaders to account. They acknowledge that previously this process has not been as robust as it needs to be.
- Governors are fully conversant with their statutory duties for safeguarding, ensuring that staff are recruited with careful consideration.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture of safety in school and are vigilant in checking that procedures are implemented to protect pupils. All staff understand their obligations for safeguarding, and this is emphasised throughout the school's work. For example, pupils learned about safety on building sites when work was taking place on the school site.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school. Most parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their child is safe in school. The school conducts a range of risk assessments to keep pupils and staff safe.
- All members of staff are checked for their suitability to work with children. Accurate and up-to-date records of these checks are maintained.
- Leaders, teachers and other staff are aware of the school's procedures for safeguarding. They take appropriate action when necessary. They liaise with outside agencies when they have a concern and they work hard to support families in need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching across the school is inconsistent. Too little is expected of pupils, and there is insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' self-help skills so they learn to be independent and effective learners.
- The most able pupils are not achieving as well as they should be. Teaching is not providing them with the skills and knowledge to achieve higher standards. They are not given work which challenges them or deepens their understanding in either mathematics or reading.
- There is some good teaching in the school, but too often pupils are not engaged in clearly focused tasks designed to accelerate their progress. Time is wasted while pupils wait for adult intervention, support or additional work because they have quickly completed the set task.
- Lessons in reading have helped pupils to enjoy books. For the older pupils, lessons often lack opportunities for in-depth discussion of texts to help pupils understand the author's intention or help them gain an appreciation of the author's style or a particular genre.
- The teaching of phonics has recently been revised, but as yet the new approaches have not impacted positively on the outcomes of the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Improvement in the teaching of mathematics is having an impact on ensuring that pupils learn across a range of mathematical topics. Teacher assessment

is used on a regular basis to find out what pupils do not know. However, this information is not used well to fill in gaps in pupils' knowledge or set work which challenges the most able pupils. As a result, these pupils are often doing work that is too easy and are not given opportunities to master the subject in any real depth or attain at a high standard.

- The quality of teaching writing across the school has resulted in improved outcomes for pupils in both key stages 1 and 2. Pupils have opportunities to write across a range of genres and develop a lively writing style. Pupils have a good understanding of the school's marking policy and can talk about how it helps them improve their writing.
- The needs of pupils who have high levels of SEN and/or disabilities are well met through the deployment of teaching assistants. Provision is well organised, with specific programmes of learning mapped out, and tracked to ensure that these pupils make good progress. Pupils who have social and emotional needs are effectively supported and managed by staff.
- The teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics is effective. The teaching of art, music and history has had a positive impact on pupils' enjoyment as well as on developing their skills in these subjects. During the inspection, it was noted that pupils show an appropriate competence for their age in making a simple computer program.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school puts a great deal of emphasis on supporting the most vulnerable pupils and their families and understands their needs.
- Improving the attendance of pupils who are most at risk has been a high priority, and this has had a positive impact on reducing absences, particularly of the disadvantaged pupils. The school rewards good attendance and actively follows up absenteeism, with home visits when necessary.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. Pupils understand how to manage risk. They understand the risks of using the internet and social media.
- Assemblies are used well to celebrate achievement and promote themes such as 'Respecting rights', and these messages are positively reflected in pupils' attitudes.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Nearly all pupils who responded to the survey said that the school encourages them to be independent. In lessons, they do not apply this skill to be effective learners. They often rely on adult intervention and lack the resilience to try for themselves, and this is reflected in their slow progress.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in and around school and they are polite and show good manners. Most pupils and parents are confident that the school deals effectively

with bad behaviour and bullying. Pupils talked with passion about their school and are proud that school is a safe place to be where everyone is valued and treated with respect. This is reflected in their improved rates of attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Throughout the school, the rate of pupils' progress particularly in reading and mathematics is variable. Progress overall is not good enough and reflects the inconsistencies in teaching.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching have resulted in improvement to standards reached in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1, compared with published data for previous years. By the end of key stage 2, the progress that pupils make in mathematics and writing is now speeding up. The progress that pupils make in reading has shown no sustained improvement.
- In phonics, pupils in key stage 1 show good decoding skills when reading and plausible spelling attempts in their writing. Despite improvements in the teaching of phonics, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 remains stubbornly below the national average. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly in line with the national average.
- Once pupils have secured their early reading skills to decode unfamiliar words, their progress in reading slows. Pupils said that they enjoy reading, but their lack of knowledge of unfamiliar words and understanding of authors' use of language hampers their ability to discuss texts in any depth. This weakness is reflected in the low number of pupils achieving the higher standard in reading at the end of key stage 2.
- In mathematics, pupils are now making faster progress than in recent years because the school's approach to teaching mathematics has been improved. Pupils apply their basic skills to mathematical problems and are developing their reasoning skills to give plausible explanations for their answers. However, the most able pupils are not doing as well as they could because, for example, mathematical problems they are given lack any real challenge.
- Attainment in writing at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 is now broadly in line with the national average. This is because initiatives to improve the teaching of writing have largely been effective. The skills pupils are taught to improve their spelling and grammar are applied to their written work. However, the older pupils' use of punctuation is often limited to basic demarcation. Pupils do not confidently use, for example, apostrophes and semi colons or accurately punctuate direct speech.
- Pupils enjoy the topics they learn and have good opportunities to apply their writing in subjects such as science, history and geography. Their enjoyment of art is reflected in the good standards seen in pupils' sketchbooks and around the school in work on display. Pupils are able to explain their scientific understanding of subjects such as electrical circuits or the impact of sugar on tooth decay.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar varied progress to that of their peers. Leaders track how well these pupils are doing in English and mathematics and have provided additional teaching time. This is starting to have an impact on helping them to catch up, but their progress remains less than good.

- The achievement of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. Work is well planned to meet the needs of these pupils. Those who have specific learning difficulties benefit from specialised support, and this, alongside good support from teaching assistants, ensures that they make good progress.

Early years provision

Good

- With the support from the Trust's early years champion, leaders have been effective in improving provision and outcomes in the early years. Following staff changes, the school now has a new leader in post from next term, which will stable leadership. Parents expressed positive views about the school's provision for its youngest pupils.
- Children enter the early years with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age. A high proportion of children enter the school with poor communication and language skills, and some have had little experience of books or opportunities for drawing and writing. The number of children who achieve the expected outcomes at the end of the early years foundation stage is in line with the national average, and this represents good progress from the children's less than typical starting points.
- The commitment of the staff and the provision of stimulating activities result in children's high levels of engagement and keenness to learn. Good relationships are soon established. Children quickly adapt to the routines and expectations of the early years.
- Children are taught the basic reading and mathematical skills through focused lessons and play activities that support new learning. The effective teaching of phonics has resulted in children leaving the Reception classes with reading standards broadly in line with the national average. Children's spoken language is well developed by staff who use questioning and modelling to help pupils talk in full sentences.
- The teaching of writing has been effective, particularly in developing boys' enthusiasm for making books and labelling their models. They spontaneously use writing in play activities, collecting and delivering letters to children busily writing inside the tent.
- Although the space of the outside area is limited, good opportunities are provided for children to promote their physical development and play freely. Near the 'mud kitchen', children were keen to encourage the growth of their new plants by watering them, ensuring as they did so that the lead inspector understood that plants need water.
- Assessment and planning are used to focus on children's next steps in learning. Adult questioning and intervention are used well to further learning when children play independently or to direct them to a purposeful activity.
- Children's behaviour is good, both in the classroom and in the outside area where activities are well supervised. Children sustain interest and focus when participating in a task. Children learn to take on age-appropriate responsibility. For example, they are quick to tidy up and put things back in the right place.
- The school works hard to engage parents and maintain daily contact. Transition is effective, and staff establish links with home and liaise with the child's previous setting before the child starts school. The move into key stage 1 is well managed and children are well prepared for their next stage of education.

- Leaders ensure that the welfare and safety of children are given a high priority and that staff are skilled and responsive to children's individual needs. They ensure that good links are fostered with external agencies and specialists to support children who have particular needs. The setting is a safe place for children, and all health and safety requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	141998
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10048358

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor led
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	278
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Elaine Jones
Headteacher	Deborah Turnbull
Telephone number	01915 862937
Website	www.denehouse-pri.durham.sch.uk
Email address	debbie.turnbull@denehouseprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Dene House Primary School is a larger than average-sized primary school. It converted to an academy in September 2015 and is part of the Tudhoe Learning Trust. There is currently an acting headteacher in post supported by a part time associated headteacher appointed by the Trust.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and there are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and also have a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all classrooms, and some together with the acting headteacher and associated headteacher. In addition, inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- Inspectors scrutinised some pupils' work and listened to some pupils read. They spoke with a number of pupils about their enjoyment of school and their opinions of behaviour and safety. Inspectors considered the 18 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff and governors and took into account the 16 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of school documents. These included the school's self-evaluation report, development plan, behaviour and attendance records, governing body documents and documents relating to safeguarding and the monitoring of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors talked to some parents to seek their views about the school. They took into account the responses of those parents who submitted their views to the inspection team, as well as the 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Karen Heath, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Angela Whistler	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Nimer	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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