

Inspection of Dunston Primary and Nursery Academy

Dunston Lane, Newbold, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S41 8EY

Inspection dates:	18 and 19 March 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Louise Parker. This school is part of Minerva Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Bev Matthews, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Doyle.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this school. They feel well cared for. Older pupils enjoy having responsibility and take pride in contributing to the school community. Members of the pupil parliament, head pupils and play leaders carry out their roles diligently.

The school wants pupils to 'do the right thing, in the right way at the right time'. It makes teaching pupils the 'ready, respect and safe' rules a priority from when they start at the school. Younger pupils learn quickly to sit smartly. They listen carefully to their teachers. Pupils try their best to live up to the school's high expectations. When pupils struggle with this, staff support them sensitively and effectively.

The effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) remains a strength. Pupils with a disability who access the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) receive excellent support. They are fully included in the life of the school.

The school aims for pupils to be the best they can be. It has recently designed an ambitious curriculum to support this aim. Children get off to a strong start learning this curriculum in the early years. However, as pupils throughout school have not benefitted fully from the curriculum yet, their achievement is not where it should be.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has identified the important knowledge pupils need to learn in all subjects. Right from the early years, this knowledge is thought out in a logical order to suit how the school organises its classes. The curriculum was designed with Dunston pupils in mind. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' language. Children in the early years talk clearly and enthusiastically about their activities. High-quality interactions with staff develop children's speech and language effectively.

The school ensures that pupils 'reactivate' learning from previous lessons so that pupils' knowledge builds on what they already know. The curriculum is organised with the intention of pupils connecting and making sense of new learning, such as through a focus on an overarching enquiry. As the curriculum is new, pupils still have deficits in their knowledge due to weaknesses in the school's previous curriculum. In some of its work, the school has not equipped staff with the necessary expertise to adapt the curriculum effectively to address these gaps, or to bring pupils' learning together. As a result, some of the pupils' knowledge is insecure and sometimes disjointed. At times, the school does not ensure that teachers check pupils' knowledge effectively. Therefore, misconceptions and insecurities in pupils' knowledge are sometimes not identified and addressed.

The school is ambitious for all its pupils. It identifies pupils' needs quickly and puts in place the appropriate provision. Pupils with SEND are well supported to learn the school's curriculum and to progress towards their individual targets. Staff adapt learning activities skilfully so pupils with SEND, such as those who access the specially resourced provision, learn well alongside pupils in the rest of the school.

The school makes learning to read a priority. The phonics programme is followed consistently by staff. Pupils enjoy phonics and mostly join in confidently. Pupils practise with phonics and read every day at school. Reception-age children spot sounds when playing games, and they use them when writing. Older pupils speak positively of the newly introduced 'book study'. They find the school's well-chosen texts highly engaging, and this helps to instil a love of reading. However, pupils who fall behind with phonics and reading do not catch up quickly enough. This is because some of the extra help the school provides is not effective or sufficient. Sometimes, the teaching of reading is not adapted amply enough to address pupils' needs.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils behave well in class and at unstructured times. Playtimes are energetic, and pupils play kindly and considerately. Pupils benefit from learning how to identify and manage their feelings. They are well supported by staff when this proves more challenging. Rates of attendance have not been high enough. The school constantly emphasises the importance of attending school regularly. It analyses attendance information to identify barriers for families and provides helpful support. Regular attendance is celebrated and is improving.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves healthy and safe, including online. Their learning is enhanced by meeting with visitors, such as those from the local police or fire services. Pupils are aware and respectful of what makes people different. For example, they have a strong sense that people with disabilities should be treated fairly. However, pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and the importance of these values in modern society is limited.

Together with the new trust, leaders have a clear sense of what the school needs to improve. The trust has already supported leaders to make notable improvements. Staff have experienced several changes in recent years but remain committed to the school's vision for improvement. They appreciate how the school has increased their training opportunities. They feel better supported to improve their teaching of the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that staff have the expertise to implement the new curriculum effectively. Teaching is sometimes not adapted sufficiently to take account of the deficits in pupils' prior learning. Sometimes, pupils are not well supported to build on and consolidate their knowledge as intended. The school should ensure that staff receive the guidance and support needed to implement the curriculum effectively.
- The school's processes for checking pupils' learning and the use of assessment information are not consistently effective. Sometimes, pupils have persistent

misconceptions or gaps in knowledge that hinder their learning as a result. The school should ensure that pupils' learning is checked routinely to identify and address errors and gaps in knowledge.

- At times, the school does not provide enough curriculum adaptation and expert support for pupils who fall behind in phonics and reading. This means these pupils do not catch up quickly enough. The school should ensure that pupils at the earlier stages of learning to read are well supported to catch up quickly.
- Sometimes, the school does not help pupils enough to understand fundamental British values and the importance of equality between different people and communities. As a result, pupils do not have an age-appropriate depth of understanding of these important topics. The school should ensure that it prepares pupils for life in modern Britain effectively.

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	145250
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10347666
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	255
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Doyle
CEO of the trust	Bev Matthews
Headteacher	Louise Parker
Website	www.dunston.derbyshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 June 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2023.
- The school joined the Minerva Learning Trust in December 2024.
- The school has an eight-place specialist resource provision for pupils with cerebral palsy and other physical impairments.
- The school does not currently 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 lead inspector met with trustees, including the chair of trustees, in addition to members of the local governing board. She also met with the CEO and vice-CEO.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders of the school and considered a range of documentation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography, physical education and art and design. 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.
- Inspectors listened as some pupils read to a familiar member of staff. Inspectors also considered evidence about some other curriculum subjects.
- 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.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site during breaktimes.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of pupils and staff. Inspectors spoke to parents and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Claire Stylianides, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Peter Johnston

Ofsted Inspector

Rebecca Thompson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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