

Inspection of Howden-le-Wear Primary School

School Street, Howden-le-Wear, Crook, County Durham DL15 8HJ

Inspection dates:	17 and 18 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher of this school is Christopher Baines. This school is part of Advance Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Kelvin Simpson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Boddy. There is also a head of school, Hannah Clark, who is responsible for this school.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Howden-le-Wear Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Howden-le-Wear Primary School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as an academy. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff at Howden-le-Wear Primary School make pupils feel part of the Howden family. A strong sense of belonging permeates the school. Pupils feel valued, supported and safe. Adults across the school are attentive to pupils' needs. Pupils who are new to school quickly settle in, including children who join in Nursery and Reception.

'The Howden Code' sets out what is expected of pupils' conduct. This tells pupils that they should 'be kind', 'make the right choice' and 'be the best they can be'. Pupils' behaviour consistently meets these high expectations. Their conduct is remarkable. Pupils across the school have a genuine care for their peers and look out for one another.

The school sets out for all pupils to achieve well. Many do, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). By the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement in national tests is above average in mathematics and spelling, grammar and punctuation.

There is a wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop into active citizens. Pupils take on school leadership roles with pride. There is regular engagement between pupils and people and organisations from the areas that the school serves. For many, the school is an important pillar of the community.

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

The curriculum in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is strongly embedded and well established. Pupils gain a strong body of knowledge in these subjects over time. Mathematics is a particular strength and is well taught across the school, including in the early years. Key mathematical concepts are introduced carefully to children in Nursery and Reception. Adults identify extra opportunities during the day to secure mathematical knowledge among children. They get sufficient time to work with mathematical concepts. This helps to secure knowledge in long-term memory. As they move through the school, pupils gain a deep understanding of mathematics.

Subjects like geography and history have undergone improvements in recent years. Supported by trust leaders, staff have developed well-designed curriculums in the foundation subjects. As these newer curriculums embed, pupils' knowledge is becoming more secure. Occasionally, pupils remember the lesson activities better than the key learning. Pupils sometimes struggle to define some of the subject-specific vocabulary that the school wants them to remember. As a result, pupils do not fully secure some of the key knowledge identified in curriculum planning.

The school swiftly identifies pupils with SEND. Leaders draw upon expertise from the trust to gain a greater understanding of individual pupil's needs. For example, trust occupational therapists give practical advice to staff. This means that pupils with physical needs get bespoke support. As a result of careful and well-targeted strategies, pupils with SEND access the full curriculum.

Pupils' behaviour is consistently impressive. The school has instilled a sense of duty among pupils. They behave well because they know it is important to do so. They care for their peers because it is the right thing to do. Some pupils with SEND have challenges regulating their emotions. The school takes intelligent action to ensure that these pupils receive support to behave well. They reach the same high expectations for behaviour as everyone else.

Reading is prioritised in school. Staff are well trained in early reading, which helps them to deliver the phonics programme effectively. Most pupils leave Year 1 with a sound knowledge of phonics. The minority of pupils who need to catch up with phonics in Year 2 get effective support. This helps them to grow in confidence and become increasingly fluent readers. Higher up the school, pupils adore the books that they read. They are enthusiastic about reading for pleasure.

The school's vision is for all pupils to develop into happy, confident citizens of the future. Many aspects of this vision are realised. There is a well-structured programme of personal development. For example, pupils' independence is developed progressively from one year to the next. There is a wealth of opportunities for pupils to engage with extra-curricular activities. Most pupils engage in a wide range of after-school clubs. Recent improvements to activities at social times are improving pupils' self-confidence. Pupils understand the importance of respecting difference. However, they lack a deep understanding of different faiths and cultures. Pupils cannot talk with confidence about the key features of many important world religions. This means that they lack a full appreciation of the range of different cultures that make up modern Britain and further afield.

Leaders have an accurate view of the school. This includes those responsible for governance, who provide appropriate challenge and support. They challenge decisions to ensure that they are in the best interests of pupils. Staff are on board with leaders' vision for the school. All staff who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of foundation subjects, some key knowledge and subject-specific vocabulary is not sufficiently emphasised in teaching. As a result, pupils do not secure important key knowledge in their long-term memory. The school should ensure that the curriculum is strengthened so that pupils develop a secure knowledge of important key concepts and vocabulary.
- The school's provision for developing pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures is not entirely effective. As a result, pupils do not gain a secure knowledge of

the characteristics of different religions and cultures. The school should strengthen the provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development so that they can fully celebrate the things we share in common across cultural and religious communities.

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	148852
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10379420
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Boddy
CEO of the trust	Kelvin Simpson
Executive Headteacher	Christopher Baines
Head of school	Hannah Clark
Website	https://howden-le-wearprimary.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Advance Learning Partnership in 2022.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was not making use of alternative provision.
- The school has its own before- and after-school provision for pupils.
- The school's Nursery has provision for two-year-old children. However, at the time of the inspection, no two-year-olds were attending the Nursery.

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.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to senior leaders, including the chief executive of the trust, the chair of the board of trustees and members of the local academy council, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and design and technology. 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 spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects. Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally throughout the inspection. Inspectors listened to pupils read to a familiar adult and visited reading interventions.
- 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 lead inspector met the SEND coordinator and visited lessons to evaluate how pupils with SEND were being supported in school.
- A range of school documentation was reviewed during the inspection, including the school's improvement planning and attendance analysis.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the online Ofsted staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Graham Findlay, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Mitchinson	Ofsted Inspector

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