

Inspection of Montalbo Nursery & Primary School

Fairfield Road, Barnard Castle, County Durham DL12 8TN

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Montalbo Nursery & Primary School receive an exceptional education. Leaders have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve, and these expectations are met. Pupils love coming to school and their parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about their children's experience.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. They are engaged and attentive in lessons, and there is a culture of respect for everyone. Pupils insist that there is no bullying and that adults are there to support them with whatever worries they may have. They are happy and feel safe in school.

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is highly ambitious. Work in pupils' books is of a very high quality and reflects the high expectations of adults. The experiences that are provided for pupils extend significantly beyond the curriculum. For example, in summer 2022, all pupils had the opportunity to perform a musical production to large audiences of parents at a theatre or in school. There are also extensive opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors. These opportunities are open to all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

All staff are determined to provide the best education and care for every pupil, including those with SEND. Leaders' decisions are based on a strong understanding of how pupils learn. The curriculum has been meticulously planned. There has been a continuous focus on creating a knowledge-rich curriculum across all subjects. The curriculum provides a coherent sequence of learning from early years through to Year 6. The seeds of subjects such as history and science are clearly sown in the early years curriculum. Teachers make frequent checks on what pupils have learned. This helps them to identify and address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Lessons begin with recaps of previous learning, and this helps pupils recall and retain important knowledge. Work in pupils' books is of a very high standard. In science, pupils demonstrate a richness in their understanding of scientific knowledge and experimental process. In art, the quality of pupils' work is exceptional. The support provided for pupils with SEND is highly effective. Staff work with the special educational needs coordinator and with external experts to make sure that teachers meet the needs of pupils with SEND very well.

Staff show a deep commitment to reading. Teachers are experts in teaching reading. Children start learning phonics as soon as they start in the Reception class. They have books that are well matched to their ability. When pupils are identified as needing additional support with reading, they receive extra teaching that is very well matched to their needs. This helps them to keep up. Staff encourage a love of reading. Teachers frequently read aloud to pupils. In early years, children excitedly talk about learning that relates to their favourite books.

Pupils are polite and very well behaved. Routines are strong and consistent. Pupils focus well on their learning. Leaders have established a purposeful environment. Pupils want to learn and are able to learn. Teachers set clear class routines that encourage effective speaking, listening and recording of ideas. Over the inspection, pupils behaved extremely well despite the stormy weather that disrupted their normal play.

Warm relationships exist throughout the school. Pupils from different phases and year groups play and work together extremely well. In lessons and through assemblies, pupils learn about and discuss important issues, such as equalities. They have considered the social role of women in society over time. They have learned about developments in democracy. They are well prepared to be active and positive citizens in the future.

In early years, adults help children to be independent and confident. In Nursery, children settle exceptionally well. They listen, engage, talk willingly and support one another. The children enjoy well-planned and exciting activities in a vibrant environment where learning is celebrated. Adult interactions with children are positive and deliberately develop children's language and vocabulary.

Leaders are committed to staff development and well-being. Professional development is prioritised. Subject knowledge and leadership skills are continually developing. Staff value the lengths to which leaders go to ensure that staff are looked after and that their workload is manageable.

The governance of the school is very strong. Governors are committed and share the ambition and expectations of school leaders. They understand their role and know their statutory duties. They are unafraid to challenge leaders when necessary. They make visits to the school to check that agreed policies are implemented and to make sure that they know the school well. They bring their experience, skills and knowledge to their roles effectively and supplement this with relevant training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors take their safeguarding responsibilities extremely seriously. They have maintained a strong culture of safeguarding. Effective systems are in place to keep pupils safe. Adults know the signs to look for when pupils are vulnerable and the process to report and record any concerns that they may have. Staff receive regular and relevant training on safeguarding. Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of adults working at the school.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and understand the potential risks of using technology.

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](#)' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	114115
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10227454
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah O'Doherty
Headteacher	Christopher Minikin
Website	www.montalbo.durham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs a breakfast club, which is open to all pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative provisions to support pupils with specific needs.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, science, history and computing. The inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers (including those in the early stages of their career), spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to young pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, in the dining hall, at breaktime and at lunchtime.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to staff, parents and governors. Safeguarding documentation was scrutinised, including the school's safeguarding policies and records. Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed relationships between pupils and adults.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents informally in person and formally through the responses and free-text comments submitted to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff and pupils were considered through meetings, as well as considering their responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Dughall McCormick, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Malcolm Kirtley

Senior His Majesty's Inspector

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