

Tanfield Lea Community Primary School

Address: Tanfield Lea, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 9LU

Unique reference number (URN): 131545

Inspection report: 6 May 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.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders ensure that securing high attendance rates for pupils is everyone's responsibility. Leaders monitor and analyse pupils' attendance information regularly. They take targeted action when attendance starts to slip. Staff play their part by rewarding and incentivising pupils to attend. As a result, very few pupils are absent and attendance for all pupils has been increasing year on year. The proportion of pupils classed as persistently absent is well below national averages. For pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the school makes sensitive adaptations to encourage them to attend. This includes variations to timetables, or opportunities to spend time with staff to support pupils' wellbeing at the start of the school day. Consequently, the rates of attendance for these pupils are high.

Behaviour records evidence that bullying is rare. Leaders take effective action to resolve issues when they do occur. Pupils engage positively and consistently well with their learning. They work hard and take great pride in the work that they produce. Classrooms are very calm and purposeful spaces where pupils can learn without interruption. At playtimes, pupils show courtesy and respect to each other. They play adventurously and cooperatively. By the time pupils leave the school they are confident individuals committed to being the best version of themselves.

Early years

Strong standard ●

The early years is a strength of the school. Children thrive in a warm and welcoming environment rich in opportunities to explore number, language and books. Highly trained and skilful staff bring a well designed curriculum to life. Adults maximise opportunities for learning by carefully modelling the skills and language that children need to remember. As a result, children's vocabulary, number and phonic knowledge quickly grows. Staff deepen children's thinking through carefully organised tasks that engage and motivate children as they learn through play.

Highly effective communication with parents and carers together with carefully considered transition arrangements ensure that staff know the needs and interests of all children when they join in the Nursery Year. Staff use this information to make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum and learning activities to ensure that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities thrive. Staff prioritise children's personal, social and emotional development. Well established routines, such as handwashing and toothbrushing equip children with the self-care skills and confidence that they need. Children at Tanfield Primary School make rapid and sustained progress through the curriculum relative to their starting points. They are extremely well prepared for Year 1 and beyond.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Leaders have made positive curriculum changes to prioritise pupils' foundational knowledge and skills. Children in the early years make accelerated progress through the curriculum from their starting points. They develop the confidence and behaviours that they need to be well prepared for Year 1. By securing this firm foundation, the majority of pupils leave Key Stage 1 as competent, confident readers, writers and mathematicians. Pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make secure progress through the curriculum from their individual starting points, enabling them to build their knowledge across a wide range of subjects. Over time, and by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' achievements are in line with national averages. Pupils are typically well prepared for the challenges and opportunities that secondary school will bring.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. An effective professional development programme ensures that teachers have the subject knowledge they need to teach the curriculum well. Teachers model new concepts clearly and regularly revisit previous learning to help pupils to remember what they have been taught. Staff know pupils' needs and typically adapt teaching appropriately for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged. Reading is taught effectively, using suitable texts that build pupils' fluency and confidence. Where pupils have gaps in their knowledge, they are supported through targeted interventions.

Since the last inspection, leaders have used this information to make improvements to the writing curriculum. Pupils now follow a curriculum that prioritises the key skills of handwriting, grammar, spelling and punctuation. Effective teaching ensures that pupils secure these essential skills before moving on to more complex tasks. As a result, pupils' early writing is typically of a high standard. Staff prioritise introducing pupils to new and adventurous, subject-specific vocabulary. However, the same high standards that teachers have in English lessons have yet to translate into the wider curriculum. In these subjects, pupils' handwriting, spelling and grammar are less accurate. This hinders the quality of their writing across the curriculum.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Tanfield Lea is an inclusive school. Leaders are tenacious advocates of equality. The school welcomes pupils from all backgrounds, including those who have more complex needs. Leaders' inclusive approach means that all pupils feel safe, valued and part of the school community.

Staff are quick to identify pupils who may need additional support. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged, have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or are known to children's social care. Staff have received the training that they need to make the necessary adaptations to the curriculum. Typically, this means that pupils benefit from carefully tailored

support. This helps to remove pupils' barriers to learning and wellbeing so that they can play an active role in all aspects of school life. Leaders make regular checks on the quality of the support provided. They have a clear understanding of whether the strategies that are used are working. Where support is less impactful, leaders work with teachers and other professionals to make necessary changes.

Leaders' use of pupil premium funding is strategic. They prioritise key actions that they know will make a difference to pupils. This includes work on attendance and increasing participation in wider curriculum opportunities for pupils who are disadvantaged or known to children's social care. Against these priorities, leaders are making clear progress.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Since the last inspection, the leadership of the school has changed. Leaders have quickly established a new vision and a set of values for the school that are widely understood by staff, governors and pupils. A cycle of monitoring gives leaders and governors detailed oversight of the school's performance. Leaders and governors use these insights to evaluate the school accurately. Leaders' actions are targeted towards strategies that will make the biggest difference to pupils. As a result, leaders have made positive curriculum changes, such as improvements to the writing curriculum and significant developments in the early years.

Governors appropriately challenge and support the work of the school. They actively engage with a review of key policies to ensure the school is meeting its statutory obligations in relation to equality and inclusion. Staff describe the school as having a positive culture in which leaders are visible, approachable and responsive. Staff morale is high because they feel valued and supported. Leaders carefully consider staff wellbeing and take practical steps to reduce workload. A well-structured professional learning programme has strengthened staff expertise.

By encouraging visits to school and through effective communication, leaders engage well with their parental community. Parents and carers are typically positive about the school and the support it provides to their children.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders are committed to providing pupils with a broad range of opportunities that widen their view of the world. This is exemplified through the 'children's charter', the school's commitment to providing a rich set of experiences for all pupils. Pupils take part in a wide variety of activities that develop their confidence and broaden their social and cultural horizons. This includes residential visits, learning basic first aid, trips to the theatre and participation in the school talent show. The annual litter pick helps pupils to understand their social responsibilities to their community. Pupils in key stage 2 develop their musical talents by learning the ukulele. Leaders ensure the programme for personal development supports disadvantaged pupils well. They carefully monitor pupils' attendance at clubs and sporting opportunities. Participation in clubs and activities for these disadvantaged pupils is high.

The relationships and sex education and health education curriculum ensures that pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. For older pupils, this

includes an understanding of consent. Generally, pupils understand the importance of British values, such as the rule of law or democracy. This is brought to life when pupils democratically elect their peers to positions of responsibility. Pupils enjoy their personal, social, health and economic lessons. They are taught about how to keep themselves healthy and how to stay safe online. Pupils know the importance of keeping their personal information private and how to report concerns they may have about internet use. Support for pupils' social and emotional needs includes social groups that provide a forum for pupils to share their concerns and for their problems to be resolved. The broad range of opportunities provided ensures that pupils develop many important personal qualities and skills, such as resilience and perseverance.

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

Tanfield Lea Primary School is a safe, exciting and happy place where pupils thrive. As soon as children start in the early years, staff get to know them and their families well. This helps them to get off to a flying start in their schooling. Pupils attend school regularly. They are motivated to come to school and to work hard. Any barriers to regular attendance are quickly removed.

The school's motto, 'opening doors and enriching lives', is realised through the carefully designed curriculum and broad range of experiences that pupils enjoy. Staff help pupils to have high aspirations for themselves. Pupils are positive about their learning. They are motivated to achieve well and most do. Pupils who face barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing are typically well supported. Overall, pupils are well-prepared for their next stage of education.

Relationships between staff and pupils are deeply respectful. Pupils experience a tangible sense of belonging. Leaders and staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. This starts in the Nursery Year where children are encouraged to take turns and play together. Pupils who struggle to meet these high standards are provided with the support that they need. They are included and valued members of the school community. Pupils enjoy their playtimes. The outdoor environment is a place of excitement and adventure. Pupils climb, swing and play games together cooperatively. Some pupils hold positions of responsibility. Prefects, for example, take pride in supporting their friends during break and lunchtimes. Bullying is rare. Pupils know that staff take action to address any concerns that they may have. Worries that they post in the school post box are dealt with quickly.

The school's 'children's charter' ensures that pupils enjoy a wide variety of opportunities to explore their local area and places further afield. Annual trips to theatres, museums and the coast broaden pupils' view of the world, beyond the village of Tanfield Lea.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that the support strategies in place for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are used consistently across all classes and key

stages.

- Leaders should ensure that the expectations that staff have of pupils' handwriting, spelling and grammar are in place across all curriculum subjects.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors of this school is Mr Andrew Gladstone-Heighton.

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.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, staff and pupils during the inspection. Inspectors also met with representatives of the governing body and the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The leadership of the school has changed since the last inspection, including the appointment of a new headteacher from September 2024.

The school runs a breakfast and after-school club for pupils who attend the school.

The school provides education for two-year-olds.

The school currently does not use alternative provision.

Headteacher: Mark Temple

Lead inspector:

Chris Pearce, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Sonia Fraser, Ofsted Inspector

Nikkie Godbold, 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 6 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

351

Close to 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

400

Above 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)

30.79%

Close to 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

0.00%

Well below 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

22.51%

Well above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above 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	65%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	64%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	60%	Above

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	79%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	76%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	75%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	85%	73%	Above

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	71%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	69%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	71%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	73%	71%	Close to average

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	82%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	79%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	81%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	85%	73%	Above

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	41%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	45%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	31%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	44%	Close to average

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	63%	62%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	45%	63%	Below
2023/24 (final)	56%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	86%	60%	Above

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
Latest 3 year average	51%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	55%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	44%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	57%	58%	Close to average

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
Latest 3 year average	73%	60%	Above
2024/25 (final)	64%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	93%	59%	Above

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	41%	68%	-26 pp
2024/25 (final)	45%	69%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	31%	67%	-36 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	66%	-16 pp

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	63%	80%	-16 pp
2024/25 (final)	45%	81%	-35 pp
2023/24 (final)	56%	80%	-23 pp
2022/23 (final)	86%	78%	7 pp

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	51%	78%	-27 pp
2024/25 (final)	55%	78%	-24 pp
2023/24 (final)	44%	78%	-34 pp
2022/23 (final)	57%	77%	-20 pp

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	73%	80%	-7 pp
2024/25 (final)	64%	81%	-17 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	79%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	93%	79%	14 pp

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 (3 term)	4.1%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.9%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.4%	5.9%	Close to average

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 (3 term)	5.9%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	10.2%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	14.7%	16.2%	Close to average

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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