

Kells Lane Primary School

External validation date: 24th March 2025

External Validator: John Rees

Outcome: Based on the visit's findings, I can confirm that the external validation visit was successful. I am therefore pleased to inform you that Kells Lane Primary School now holds Externally Validated Healthy Schools Status.

I was particularly grateful to Abigail, Jessica, Mara and Megan for their knowledgeable and enthusiastic comments about the school when they showed me around. They spoke thoughtfully and were articulate in their explanations about the strengths of the Healthy Schools provision. It was a pleasure to hear their views; they were a credit to themselves, the school, and their families.

The other children who contributed to focus group discussions and informal conversations were equally thoughtful, aware and confident in their descriptions and understanding of the school and the Healthy Schools provision at Kells Lane Primary.

Information about the assessment process

- Before the external validation visit, the school self-evaluated its current Healthy Schools practice within the four core themes: Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE), Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, and Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH), using the School Health Check. The school judged itself in each theme using Ofsted-style grade descriptors.
- The external validator interviewed groups of pupils, staff including the Healthy Schools Lead and the Head Teacher, but also staff responsible for physical activity, SEMH and healthy eating
- A tour of the school site was conducted to observe Healthy Schools work in practice.
- Relevant paperwork was presented as stated in the agreed list of documentation.

The school has the following strengths:

General:

Kells Lane Primary School is a co-educational institution maintained by the local authority. It serves the Low Fell area of Gateshead, Tyne and Wear and has approximately 450 pupils aged 3 to 11. The Victorian buildings provide a rich historical perspective, and the lack of green space does not hinder the educational provision; instead, many aspects have been transformed into positive learning opportunities, creating an exciting yet emotionally supportive learning environment.

All members of the school community were involved in fundraising to develop the astroturf 'ballpark' provision, which creates opportunities for before- and after-school clubs, PE in the curriculum, and playtime activities.

The most recent Ofsted report was in June 2022, when the Headteacher had only recently been appointed but reported that pupils were happy and safe and that the senior leadership team had high expectations for pupils to achieve academically and socially. Ofsted reported that reading, including phonics, was taught extremely well, and pupils were enthusiastic about reading. They also suggested that pupils apply to run their own clubs and take on their roles of responsibility enthusiastically.

It is exciting to note that although these comments are not only still valid, curriculum provision and opportunities for children to participate in and take responsibility for a wide range of additional learning

opportunities through the healthy schools approach have improved significantly.

The ethos is one of nurture and caring, but the high expectations for all are tangible and are represented throughout the school, the website, documentation, and attitudes embodied by the staff. Considerable time and care have been taken to create and sustain this ethos and provision, which is encapsulated in the school's motto: "Find your Remarkable." This is underpinned by the school's five values, which encourage children and adults to be brave, curious, ambitious, empowered, and resilient.

These values are implemented through a variety of thoughtful and exciting curriculum developments based on the four C's of the Dimensions provision: communication, conflict, culture, and conversation. There is a detailed and thoughtful description of these on the school website, but they also pervade the school, staff thinking and planning and, ultimately, provision for children to an excellent extent.

Staff and pupils are very clear about the expectations and opportunities for learning and personal development that pupils will have by the end of the 'Navigator's phase' (Year 6), but this also pervades the curriculum through to the youngest pupils where, on the day of the visit, Year 1 were going skiing.

Staff have created and continue to support various committees which offer children a significant range of leadership opportunities, giving them the chance to contribute to diversity and inclusion. The library, the tuck shop, the comic club, and the eco committee offer these opportunities, in addition to a very wide range of physical activities.

One of the most significant strengths is the leadership of Mrs Swinbank, which has created excellent opportunities for the Healthy Schools leadership of Miss Endean, PSHE leadership of Mrs Duckworth, SEMH Leadership of Mr Wells and the PE leadership of Mrs Parker. These members of staff, supported by others, including the character development lead, have created a positive, vibrant learning environment that supports the physical health and emotional well-being of the children and staff.

The other most noticeable characteristic of the school is its whole-school approach to learning and well-being, which is supported by a strong sense of community engagement and excellent relationships between children and adults. Considerable thought and care are given to curriculum planning, which aims to provide children with the best possible learning outcomes and support their physical, social, and emotional development and well-being.

The four components of Healthy Schools are outlined below, but they are shaped and organised by the leadership of Miss Endean and the Healthy Schools action plan.

PSHE:

A PSHE ethos pervades the curriculum and informs almost everything throughout the school through both curriculum and extracurricular provision. Every child is encouraged to become increasingly independent by developing their self-confidence, knowledge, and skills. The effectiveness of how staff create and sustain these diverse opportunities is excellent.

PSHE education, particularly aspects of relationships and health education, are shaped by the RHE Action Plan, led by Mrs. Duckworth, who is given management time for preparation and planning. The subject is well-resourced and in line with other curriculum areas, and it is further supported by planned curriculum time and staff CPD. RSHE provision continues to evolve as the 'Dimensions' curriculum is consolidated with pupil voice and feedback from staff.

Teaching and support staff know the children well and plan and have adapted a curriculum appropriate to their needs. Teaching staff and curriculum provision is well-supported by the school's SEMH and 'Thrive' provision, but also through the provision of Character Education, which makes strong links with fundamental British values, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of children through the Rights Respecting School Award and is demonstrated by the children's understanding of protected characteristics. PSHE objectives are also supported through a well-planned and carefully adapted series of learning activities and experiences, all aligned to help develop pupils' personal, social and health needs. There is a clear focus

on developing the attributes of the statutory expectations, such as resilience and skills, including negotiation. Staff understand the importance of modelling courteous relationships, which they do well.

A wide range of planned activities is adapted to meet pupils' social and emotional learning needs, including residential trips to Robinwood Outdoor Activity Centre for Year 4 and a residential trip to London for Year 6. These residential visits are dispersed with trips to the Beamish Museum and Durham Cathedral, as well as skiing for the youngest children at a local dry slope. The learning activities for all these trips and visits are carefully planned to engage with the curriculum and enable children to develop their social and cultural capital. There is a very clear philosophy of education that encourages and enables children to be responsible citizens and to follow the school motto to become the best they can be, allowing them to develop the skills and confidence to flourish in the wider world.

The pupil's aspirations and personal development are also supported through careers-related learning within PSHE and throughout the curriculum, and efforts are made to further engage with the local community.

Healthy Eating:

Managing pupils' food and healthy eating habits is a responsibility adopted by Miss Endean. As with all the other aspects of the Healthy Schools work at Kells Lane Primary School, healthy eating is well led, carefully thought through, and positively impacts children and their well-being. The school has, for example, evidence of changes in children's behaviour, especially after lunch, as a result of reviewing the healthy eating provision.

A healthy eating and school food action plan is in place and regularly reviewed, updated, and linked to curriculum provision. Food and drink policies are fully inclusive and accessible to pupils and their families as necessary.

The Gateshead School Meals Service provides a nutritious and balanced menu on a three-weekly cycle. The local authority follows government guidance on school food standards, portion size, and food groups. Parents and children can access the school meals menu, advice on packed lunches, and themed lunches, which are enjoyed by all. The children to whom I spoke were knowledgeable about food and the choices they make but were also able to discuss in a calm and orderly environment, which they said they appreciate.

Although the school does not have their own kitchen, the dining areas are carefully managed, allowing pupils to eat collectively or in a quieter location. Children are also encouraged to develop their social and emotional skills through careful interaction in the dining areas and the carefully managed expectations that they have half an hour to eat and then half an hour to play outside. Structuring the eating expectations in this manner has meant that children are less likely to 'bolt' their food and rush outside, which has created a calmer eating environment and reduced disruption in the playground. Such initiatives also contribute to improve learning and behaviour throughout the school

As noted above, children are responsible for running the break time, healthy eating, 'tuck shop', which is also supported by the school council and healthy food champions.

The well-planned curriculum encourages many pupils to learn about healthy eating with age-appropriate provision and food production with some raised beds, although these are still a work in progress.

Physical Activity:

Under Mrs Parker's careful and enthusiastic leadership, physical education, based on national curriculum expectations, is provided through the Dimensions curriculum and further supported by an extraordinary range of extracurricular opportunities.

The physical education curriculum is carefully structured to provide an iterative development of skills for children in Early Years learning nursery rhymes to promote walking, jumping, and some early gymnastics. This is enhanced in the summer term with 'Ball skills for Hands' and a separate provision to develop 'Ball skills for feet'. The physical education curriculum is carefully planned and sequenced throughout the children's

learning journey in school. This includes swimming in the summer term of Year 3 and opportunities to engage with the dance festival in Year 5.

Physical activity is encouraged for all children within and beyond the curriculum, who engage enthusiastically and respond to tasks and challenges, which are carefully adapted to provide appropriate stretch and challenge for their needs.

The 'ballpark' and the other hardstanding areas of the playground are fully used during curriculum time. The school also takes full advantage of local sports facilities to improve children's physical learning and develop social and emotional skills.

The Kells Lane Play Squad (KLPS), led by Mrs Gray, is a playtime project to improve the quality of play for all children. As part of the SMART school council, there is a play squad buddies action team whose responsibilities are to support play development, manage equipment, lead assemblies to provide regular play updates and meet and plan new actions to support play during learning, break, and lunchtimes.

An engaging graphic on the website outlines the 16 types of play, which the children can explain in appropriate detail.

Children have proudly represented the school in inter-school sports competitions, including soccer and basketball.

Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH):

The social, emotional and mental health of children and adults at Kells Lane is a whole-school priority. The school quite rightly focuses on pupils' learning and academic attainment, but the SEMH of children and adults is promoted and encouraged throughout every aspect of the school. It is woven throughout the curriculum, and every interpersonal engagement and developing children's 'EQ' to develop empathy is also a priority.

SEMH pervades the curriculum and how children and staff interact with each other and other community members. Based on the 'Thrive' approach, for the past 2 or 3 years, it has been very capably led by Mr. Wells and Miss Coates and supported by the SENDCo Mrs Lee and aims to support children with their emotional and social development to enable them to engage with their learning. Staff are very clear that the early identification of emotional development needs is essential to build resilience and reduce the risk of mental ill health.

Similarly, there is a wide acknowledgement that children may not always be able to express their needs verbally, but how they behave tells others a lot about their feelings. Staff also appreciate that for some children, there may be an apparent reason why they need additional support, such as bereavement, family breakdown, or identified medical conditions. There is also an acknowledgement for others that there may not be any obvious trigger as to why they are finding aspects of school and/or home life challenging.

The Thrive approach engages parents, teachers and other staff members, to help construct an action plan of targeted strategies and activities to help children re-engage with learning and life.

As alluded to above, 'pupil voice' and active engagement by children is encouraged in a multitude of ways to help improve learning outcomes for children but also to develop their social skills, self-confidence, and strong sense of community. Pupils are regularly involved with interviews for new staff, which is always an interesting experience but also reiterates the importance of children's views in maintaining and enhancing the culture at Kells Lane and the opportunities afforded both children and adults.

All the usual policies are in place and have been carefully adapted by staff and 'pupil voice' to respond to and meet the diverse needs of different children. Staff consistently encourage pupils to communicate and develop their autonomy without any real sense of limitation. This inevitably encourages children to become increasingly independent and autonomous. Children's changing social and emotional needs are managed and

responded to with dignity and compassion and an awareness that behaviour is communicating need, which must be responded to professionally and appropriately.

All staff consistently model courteous, supportive relationships with pupils and each other. Ofsted noted this three years ago, and both children and adults at Kells Lane suggest that things have improved even further since then.

The school also engages with the Belong Project, a trauma-informed approach to learning and behaviour management. For example, if a member of staff feels that they or a colleague may no longer be part of the solution, there is an accepted 'change of face' approach to help children emotionally regulate.

Staff well-being is prioritised, and all members of the teaching team have one day per fortnight for PPA, which they can take at home. Every member of staff to whom I spoke said they felt valued and trusted which is testimony to empowering and effective leadership at all levels, throughout the school.

Areas for development

General:

PSHE:

The curriculum and resources already provide excellent opportunities for personal and social development. The curriculum is already adapted to meet the needs of different pupils, with a focus on developing children's empathy and EQ. This could be enhanced still further by engaging with the free and paid-for resources from Empathy Studios and Go Givers. Careers-related learning could also be further enhanced by engaging with Primary Futures. Consideration could be given to enabling children to become more actively involved in restorative conversations when children become emotionally regulated or fall out with friends.

Healthy Eating:

This is already very well provided for through the curriculum and practical arrangements for children's eating and attitudes towards food. Regular re-visiting 'pupil voice' consultations should be considered to ensure changing needs are met and responded to. Teachers of pupils in Year 5/6 may also wish to include learning about 'food miles' within the curriculum to enhance children's understanding and enable them to engage even more effectively with sustainability issues.

Physical Activity:

Curriculum and extra-curricular provision is already excellent, although it may be worth exploring ways to increase the range of outdoor activities (such as rock climbing), dance and more inter-year competitions.

Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH):

Although the school has invested significantly in the 'Thrive' approach, it currently aspires to become a 'Thrive 'School of Excellence'. Similarly, although aspects of becoming more trauma-informed have started, there is much work to be done on this, including engagement with parents.

Quotes from the External Validation visit

Pupils:

Our school is great; it helps us to be healthy and we do lots of things with staff to make sure everybody is healthy.

The teachers are kind and helpful, and they have really helped my self-confidence.

I've got friends in other schools who don't have the chance to do all the things we do, and some of their teachers shout at them which must be horrible. Ours don't.

Staff:

Developing children's EQ and their capacity for empathy is at the heart of what we do.

The Leadership team is excellent and always looking for ways to improve outcomes for our pupils.

I really like being a member of staff here. Everyone is kind and helpful to each other and nothing is ever too much trouble to the leaders – an attitude which rubs off on how we treat the children.

Thank you to all concerned who participated in the external validation process and made me feel so welcome on the day.

I wish you all every success in the future.

Kind regards



John Rees
Healthy Schools External Validator
On behalf of Leeds Health and Wellbeing Services