

Amble First School

Edwin Street, Amble, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 0EF

Inspection dates

6 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well and make good progress from their starting points. They are keen to learn and work hard in lessons to please their teachers and share learning with their friends.
- Teaching is good because teachers plan stimulating activities which match the needs of all groups of pupils. They know their pupils well, so activities help all to succeed.
- Teaching assistants are well trained to give good support to pupils during lessons; this adds much to the quality of learning and ensures that all pupils progress at the same rate.
- Reading is well taught and pupils have plenty of opportunity for regular reading to consolidate and improve their skills.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception class. A strong emphasis on developing their social skills, including speaking and listening, helps them to settle quickly and develop independence.
- Pupils behave well in and out of the classroom. Good pastoral care makes pupils feel safe and secure because they have high levels of trust in adults, 'to sort things out'.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has skilfully managed some disruption to staffing since the previous inspection to ensure that that pupils' progress continued to improve. The governing body is skilled, knowledgeable and dedicated to making the school the best it can be.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their good reading skills to develop their writing to the same level. Teachers do not regularly give pupils time to act upon their advice to improve writing.
- Children in the Reception class do not have enough opportunities to record their learning in mathematical and creative activities to develop good early writing skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by five teachers, one of which was a shared observation with the headteacher. They also listened to pupils reading in Years 1 and 4.
- Meetings were held with senior staff, a group of Year 4 pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school's self-evaluation of its work, the school's improvement plan, the school's data for tracking the progress of pupils and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 15 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also took account of 16 responses from staff.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anne Firth	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than the average primary school.
- An above average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium (this is additional funding to support pupils in the care of the local authority and pupils who are eligible for free school meals).
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school has experienced some staffing turbulence since the previous inspection due to illness and maternity leave.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend opportunities for pupils to write well in all subjects and ensure that teachers' marking has greater effect on improving pupils' work by:
 - reducing the use of worksheets to record learning in topic work
 - expecting pupils to record their learning independently from an early age so that they develop confidence in their ability to communicate through writing
 - planning writing activities in all subjects that make use of and consolidate what pupils are learning in their literacy lessons.
- Improve the writing and recording skills of children in the Reception class by:
 - providing frequent opportunities for children to record their learning in exciting, practical mathematical activities
 - encouraging and supporting children to record in writing their experiences of creative play and talk about their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills that are below what is expected for their age, particularly in language and communication, and social and emotional development. They settle quickly into school and make good progress because learning is well planned to take account of these weaknesses and provide plenty of opportunities for children to develop talk and enquiring minds through independent play.
- While children have very good opportunities to develop their ideas through talk, and their mathematical skills through interesting practical activities, they do not have enough opportunities or encouragement to record this learning. When they enter Year 1 most have reached the levels expected for their age and are well prepared for the next stage of learning.
- School data show that good progress continues so that by the end of Year 2, the vast majority of pupils reach the expected level for their age in reading and mathematics, but slightly below the expected level in writing. This is because they do not have enough opportunities each day to practise writing in different subjects.
- Pupils learn at a good, and sometimes excellent, rate in reading because the recently introduced lessons to teach pupils about letters and the sounds they make, have been very successfully used in Years 1 and 2. Pupils enjoy these lessons because they move at brisk pace and tasks are closely matched to pupils' level of learning, so that they always experience success. Results of the assessments of early reading skills, at the end of Year 1, were at the national average in 2012.
- By the end of Year 4 pupils reach at least the expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, and each year a good proportion exceeds this level. School data and work seen in pupils' books confirm that the number making expected progress is increasing.
- This is because of the strong teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants to support pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium and those with special educational needs to make the same good progress as that of others. Results in national assessments in 2012 for pupils at the end of Year 2 showed that these groups of pupils exceeded the national average for their group. Pupils eligible for pupil premium reached roughly the same level as others in their class.
- Parents agree that their children make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good. It has improved well since the previous inspection because of good training opportunities for all staff. Parents agree that their children are well taught.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan activities that allow pupils to work independently and cooperatively with others. This develops pupils' ability to think for themselves and devise their own ways of working.
- A good example was seen in Year 4 where groups of pupils worked very well together to produce an information leaflet about the school. The teacher's clear expectation of completing the task by the end of the lesson spurred on pupils to work at a brisk rate to impress the teacher with what they could achieve.
- In too many lessons, especially in topic work, pupils do not have enough opportunity to write independently because some teachers rely too heavily on worksheets, which require one- or two-word answers.
- Reading skills are well taught and teachers make good use of their knowledge of which level pupils have reached to group them so that they have the best starting point for new learning. This results in mixed-aged classes of pupils who work well together and are fully involved in their learning because all tasks are at just the right level to achieve success.

- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and often give detailed written advice on what to do to improve their work. However, they do not follow up this good practice by allowing pupils the time to make corrections or improve their writing, for example, with better punctuation or spelling, so that they can see how they move closer to achieving their targets.
- Where teaching is good, at the start of the lesson teachers explain to pupils what they will learn, then check that pupils are on course to reach their targets during the lesson. In the best lessons, teachers scan the classroom and move alongside pupils who they see need help. This makes sure that all get off to a good start, confident they are on the right track.
- The skills of teaching assistants are well used by teachers to support pupils of all abilities to make good progress. The effectiveness of this good teamwork is seen in the similar progress made by all groups of pupils. It also explains why pupils with special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium usually meet or exceed the national average for their group.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in and out of the classroom. Their good relationships and caring attitudes make the school a happy and safe place to learn.
- Attitudes to learning are generally good and pupils relish opportunities to find out for themselves. For example, Year 3 pupils thoroughly enjoy their library sessions where they are allowed to find out about topics that interest them and make their own notes of what they learn.
- Pupils say they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They are taught to recognise different kinds of bullying and how to deal with it. Pupils report that bullying occurs very seldom and know they must report any concerns quickly to an adult and, as one pupil put it, 'not be a bystander'. Levels of staff supervision are high and staff ensure that on the playground pupils are safe and have plenty of games and resources for play.
- Older pupils enjoy their responsibilities for helping the school run smoothly and take seriously their role as buddies looking after younger children who look lonely or upset at playtimes. Members of the school council are proud of their work to improve the school and have worked with governors to consult other pupils about how best to use the outdoor space.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's determination and skilful management have raised pupils' achievement and accelerated their progress, through well planned developments in teaching and programmes for reading. Since the previous inspection, subject leaders have taken on greater responsibility for checking and improving pupils' learning and progress. They now monitor learning to pick up and share good practice with all colleagues.
- Accurate information about pupils' progress is collected regularly so that senior leaders have a clear picture of the school's strengths and where further improvement is needed. Accurate information about pupils' learning is well used. For example, pupils at risk of falling behind are quickly spotted and given additional support to help them keep up with their peers.
- There are well planned arrangements for managing teachers' effectiveness which are linked to salary progression. Teachers' performance targets are linked to pupils' progress and teachers are given opportunities to improve their skills through good quality training.
- The curriculum is planned around topics with a local themes and areas of interest to pupils. However, while good progress has been made in raising achievement in reading, the school does not fully use all subjects in the curriculum as effectively as it might to develop pupils' writing further.
- The school uses the pupil premium effectively to provide additional resources and support staff

to improve the achievement of pupils for whom the premium is intended. Consequently they reach standards very close to those of other pupils.

- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and child protection procedures are thorough. The school makes sure that all pupils have the same good opportunities and no one is discriminated against.
- The local authority gives effective light touch support to this good school.
- The governance of the school:
 - Members of the governing body are knowledgeable about the school, through regular visits and links with subject leaders. They challenge it well, over, for example, how well resources are used to get best value for money. They use the school's targets for staff to raise pupils' achievement by holding teachers to account. They are highly supportive of the school, with several involved directly in the school's work. For example, one governor helps to run the Mother and Toddler group to help prepare children to join the school, while another regularly runs breakfast club sessions.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122174
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	402084

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Stott
Headteacher	Joyce Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2010
Telephone number	01665 710388
Fax number	-
Email address	joyce.jenkins@northumberland.gov.uk

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