

Bedlington Whitley Memorial Church of England First School

Gordon Terrace, Bedlington, Northumberland, NE22 5DE

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Pupils, particularly middle and lower attainers, do not make fast enough progress in learning about letters and the sounds that they make (phonics). This hampers the development of reading skills and impairs the quality of their writing.
- Pupils with special educational needs, lower attaining pupils and those who are eligible for the pupil premium do not make as much progress as other groups of pupils.
- The quality of teaching is variable. Improvement is needed, especially to increase the pace of learning for the groups of pupils mentioned above, and to the teaching of phonics.
- Behaviour at break and lunchtimes requires improvement. The play of the majority of pupils is spoiled by the squabbles of a significant minority.
- Leadership and management, including governance, need to improve the accuracy and rigour of the school's view of its own performance. Some recently appointed leaders require training to develop the skills and expertise for their new roles.
- Improvement is needed to the robustness of risk assessments in the Nursery so that children are safe at all times. Expectations of what children in the nursery can do are not high enough; activities for independent learning do not provide enough opportunities for purposeful play.

The school has the following strengths

- Teachers make learning interesting and fun. They plan imaginative activities so learning is good in many lessons.
- Children learn well in the Reception classes and develop good independence and confidence.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and feel safe in school.
- The headteacher has developed good systems for tracking pupils' progress. She is aware that these need further development and time to embed before they are fully effective.
- The headteacher is developing the role of teaching assistants to improve their overall effectiveness.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 lessons or parts of lessons. None were shared with senior staff because of visits out of school during the inspection.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, staff, governors, pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the school’s view evaluation of its performance, the school’s information about pupils’ progress, and documentation relating to teachers’ performance and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 33 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as 27 responses from staff.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Wendy Richardson

Additional Inspector

Jane Beckett

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than average in size.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children whose parents are in the armed services, is average.
- Nearly all pupils are from White British heritage, none speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, and pupils' achievement in reading and writing, so that they are at least consistently good by:
 - urgently providing phonics training for teachers and teaching assistants so that they are all able to develop pupils' reading skills rapidly and securely by the time they leave the school
 - raising some teachers' expectations of what pupils can do, including those with special educational needs, lower attaining pupils and those eligible for the pupil premium
 - improving the accuracy of teachers' checks on pupils' progress and the use they make of assessment information to provide appropriate levels of work for all groups of pupils.
- Improve achievement for children in the nursery by:
 - ensuring all health and safety requirements are met, by making regular and robust risk assessments
 - rigorously developing children's social skills, and their confidence to learn independently
 - providing more purposeful activities which take account of children's interests and promote independent learning, especially outdoors.
- Improve the behaviour of some pupils, especially at lunch and play times, by:
 - checking on playground behaviour, then establishing firm rules for behaviour outdoors
 - training lunchtime staff to defuse pupils' squabbles and mediate in disputes
 - reviewing provision for purposeful play and the use of play spaces.
- Improve leadership and management , including governance by:
 - improving the rigour and accuracy of monitoring activities so that senior leaders are able to set the correct priorities for improvement
 - reviewing and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of senior and subject leaders so that they are clear about their accountability for performance in their subjects
 - setting clear timescales and deadlines for improvement, and clear targets by which to measure success so that the pace of school improvement increases
 - holding teachers more fully to account for the progress pupils make
 - ensuring that governors are fully trained to challenge the school about pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- When they join the nursery, a good proportion of children have skills at or above the expectation for their age. Others are below the expected level especially in their language and communication and social skills. Progress in the nursery is slow, but accelerates in the Reception classes so that by the end of the Reception Year a good proportion of children are ready for learning in Year 1.
- Pupils' progress varies from group to group within many classes. The pattern is, generally, for more-able and average pupils to make expected progress and other groups to make less progress. By the end of Year 2, pupils' performance in the national tests is broadly average, although there is some over-generous assessment of pupils' attainment in reading and writing. At the end of Year 4, the majority of pupils reach the expected level for their age, with a proportion above this level in reading, writing and mathematics. Again, some assessments are over generous.
- The teaching of phonics is not coherently planned across the school to ensure that all pupils are secure readers and writers by the time they leave. For example, it does not extend to Years 3 and 4 despite a number of pupils requiring additional support to help them read. The alternative programmes provided by teaching assistants are not effective in rapidly improving pupils' knowledge of letters and the sounds that they make.
- However, more able pupils in Year 2 write well because they have secure phonics knowledge that helps them to spell accurately and write quickly without having to spend time searching for a correct spelling.
- Progress in pupils' mathematical knowledge has increased this year due to the introduction of more problem-solving activities. Pupils speak with enthusiasm of problem solving days where they have worked on practical problems and learned together and from each other. Work in books shows they mostly work at a good rate, especially the most able pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and those supported using the pupil premium including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals are not making the same progress as other pupils. This is because their needs are not accurately assessed and expectations of what they can do are not consistently high enough. Pupils' work shows that the gap between these pupils and others is not narrowing fast enough, especially in reading and writing. Overall, the school does not provide equality of opportunity for success for all groups of pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching ranges from good to some that is inadequate in the nursery. While teachers willingly share successful practice, they have had too few training opportunities since the previous inspection to maintain consistently good levels of performance.
- In some lessons, teachers make good use of their knowledge of pupils' earlier learning and build well on this to accelerate new learning. A good example was seen in a Year 4 science lesson, where the teacher encouraged pupils to use their mathematical knowledge to produce a graph of how far they could jump. Good team questioning and clear expectations of learning helped all pupils to learn at a good rate and thoroughly enjoy their work.
- Teachers' checks on pupils' learning are not always accurate enough and the quality of marking is inconsistent. It is evident in some classes that tasks do not help pupils make good progress because they have not been adapted to ensure they learn at a good rate. For example, in some lessons, teaching assistants worked on tasks that were too difficult for lower attaining pupils by spending too long reading a text which was too difficult.
- The teaching of letters and sounds is inconsistent. It does not extend to pupils in the older classes and is currently having too little impact on the progress of many pupils. Teachers and

teaching assistants have not had regular, high quality training to develop the necessary skills, so they do not make the best use of time in these sessions.

- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching extend to the Early Years Foundation Stage. Learning for children in the nursery is not well planned, especially for learning outdoors and to develop their good social skills and knowledge about letters and their sounds. In the Reception class teaching is much more clearly and effectively focused on children's needs, so they are actively involved and make better progress. A good example was observed when children were learning about special places. The teacher developed their language and thinking well through discussion, so they were able to create their own special places using the toys available in the classroom.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- In most lessons, pupils behave well and are keen to learn. They listen well and their interest in topics is well sustained when they have short activities to show their learning. In some lessons, where pupils are expected to sit for too long on the carpet without any purposeful activity they can become fidgety and distract others.
- Many pupils have good attitudes to learning, especially where teaching is lively and they learn through activities rather than just listening.
- Older pupils confirm that behaviour at lunchtime can be a problem such as when squabbles occur on the playground. The school has responded by increasing supervision on the playground. This has met with some success, but has not fully checked some disruptive behaviour. The headteacher is taking steps to enforce playground rules and to provide further training for lunchtime staff in settling squabbles in order to change the behaviour of a minority of pupils.
- Pupils have been taught how to assess risks to their safety. They understand the different forms bullying can take and the risks associated with the internet. They say that bullying sometimes occurs, but that teachers deal with it quickly and effectively.
- Pupils enjoy contributing to the smooth running of the school and making suggestions for its improvement. Members of the school parliament are keen to take ideas to the governing body to increase the amount of play equipment outdoors. Some older pupils feel that too much of the grassed area is given over to football so that other pupils cannot use it for play. Inspectors agree that football dominates to the exclusion of other games.
- Attendance has improved since the headteacher joined the school. It is now at the national average.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher's has accurately identified where improvements are needed in teaching, assessment and subject leadership. Improvement plans are in place but lack clear timescales and targets for success.
- The headteacher has introduced good systems to track regularly pupils' progress. They are starting to have an impact on the reliability of information about the pupils' progress. However, some teachers' assessments are not always accurate, so that the school has an over generous view of pupils' progress. The headteacher recognises the need for staff training to make these and other systems more effective as quickly as possible.
- The checks made on teaching and learning are not regular enough for senior leaders to capture the good practice that exists and to share it for the benefit of all pupils' learning. Leaders and managers are not sufficiently involved in checking on teaching across a range of subjects, in order to help staff improve their performance. The school's current evaluation of teaching is over generous because it is based on too narrow a sample.
- The role of subject leaders is under-developed. They do not have enough time allocated to check on the work of their colleagues, by observing teaching and ensuring the accuracy of their assessments through examination of pupils' work. While some good developments have

occurred, for example, in improving provision for problem solving in mathematics, subject leaders do not have a strong picture of strengths and weaknesses in their subjects to set the correct priorities for improvement.

- The management of teachers' performance requires improvement. While teachers are promoting expected progress for most pupils, their training needs for teaching phonics have not been identified. Some staff questionnaire responses expressed a need for more professional development.
- The school provides a rich and interesting curriculum for pupils. Staff make use of opportunities in topic work and science to develop pupils' writing and mathematical skills. It is clear when reading pupils' work that they write at greater length when their writing has a purpose. The headteacher has developed provision for music and the expressive arts well; pupils are enthusiastic about these developments, as well as the many visits and visitors they enjoy.
- Safeguarding requirements are not fully met, because of the quality of some risk assessments in nursery.
- The school receives light touch support from the local authority
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive of the school and visit regularly to check on its work and give support in classrooms. Finances are managed well. Governors have agreed spending for pupil premium funding but have yet to evaluate the impact of this on pupils' achievement. This is because governors have not been trained to understand how the outcomes for all groups of pupils compare with pupils in other schools. They are aware of arrangements for managing teachers' performance and are keen to improve their practice.

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	122281
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	412481

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Eldridge
Headteacher	Sally Hobson
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2007
Telephone number	01670 822994
Fax number	01670 828473
Email address	admin@whitley.northumberland.sch.uk

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