

Corbridge Church of England Aided First School

St Helen's Lane, Corbridge, Northumberland, NE45 5JQ

Inspection dates 18–19 September 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. It is not good because

- Too few pupils make more than expected progress, despite their high attainment in reading and writing.
- Pupils attain less well in mathematics than in other subjects.
- Pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters represent) is too low by the end of Year 1.
- Not enough teaching is good or better because teachers' planning does not cater for pupils' different abilities, especially the more-able pupils.
- Lessons are over directed by teachers, therefore there are limited opportunities for pupils to work independently, explore ideas or solve problems.
- Teachers' methods of assessing what pupils' know, understand and can do are not always accurate.
- The behaviour policy is not consistently applied resulting in pupils not following instructions quickly enough in lessons.
- Staff do not routinely record incidents on the playground, therefore some parents think that low level bullying is not fairly dealt with.
- Senior leaders, governors and local authority personnel, over a number of years, have failed to identify that the school has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection in 2009.
- Performance management arrangements have not been carried out robustly.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils get off to a good start to their education in the Nursery class where provision is consistently good.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good when they are given work which challenges and interests them, especially older pupils.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are very good and aid pupils' enjoyment of school.
- The school provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils feel safe in school.
- Attendance is above average.
- The new acting headteacher has already identified weaknesses and has a plan in place for rapid improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher, subject leaders for English, mathematics and assessment, the teacher responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). They also had discussions with the Chair, and two other members of the Governing Body, the Head of School Improvement for Northumberland County Council and a representative of the Newcastle Diocesan Board.
- Inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by six teachers. They also listened to pupils read in Year 1 and carried out 'drop in' sessions to a number of phonics sessions.
- The lead inspector carried out three joint observations of teaching and learning with the acting headteacher and also observed her giving feedback to staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: recent records of governing body meetings; documents relating to school improvement and self-evaluation; monitoring reports from senior leaders and the local authority; the work in pupils' books in Years 2 and 4; the school's website and documents and policies relating to safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors took account of the 61 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 20 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Mrs Joy Frost, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mr John Pattinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school caters for pupils aged from three to nine years.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is much lower than national; this is an amount of money allocated to those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, are in the care of the local authority and children from service families.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- There is a privately run 'Kids Club' and a recently opened pre-school on the school site which provides child care, before and after school care and holiday care. These are inspected and reported on separately by Ofsted.
- At the time of the inspection the substantive headteacher had been absent from the school since November 2012. During that time an interim headteacher followed by the current acting headteacher have been seconded to the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve all teaching to good or better to accelerate pupils' progress, by:
 - teaching a daily phonics lesson in every class which matches pupils' ability; is fast paced and gives opportunities for every pupil to recognise, recap and articulate new sounds as well as practise writing and spelling them in new words
 - planning lessons which identify different groups of pupils' starting points within the class and matching activities more closely to their different abilities
 - planning lessons which include opportunities for more-able pupils to do different and more challenging work, thereby eradicating low level disruption in some classes
 - making sure pupils have more opportunities to work independently, explore ideas and solve problems, especially in mathematics
 - improving the marking of pupils' work to include next steps feedback and opportunities to edit and improve work in English
 - improving the opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school at all levels, including the governing body, by:
 - embedding the new system to track pupils' achievement in meetings about teachers' performance
 - using lesson observations more robustly to ensure that teachers receive accurate feedback about the quality of learning and pupils' progress in lessons, with specific areas for development which are monitored regularly
 - ensure that teachers and leaders in the school receive good support and guidance to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in their subject areas
 - improving teachers' understanding and expertise in assessing pupils' progress and attainment across the school through focused professional development which gives them opportunities to see current good practice in other settings
 - Making sure the school website contains the most up-to-date information for parents in order

to improve communication channels.

- Develop the skills of the governing body in challenging the school more robustly, by:
 - commissioning an external review of governance to assess how this aspect of management may be improved via governance.review@nationalcollege.gsi.gov.uk
 - securing stability in the long term leadership of the school as a priority.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most children start school with skills and knowledge that are in line with, or above those typical for their age. They leave in Year 4 with attainment in reading, writing and mathematics which is above the national expectation but standards are declining. As they progress through the school pupils make expected progress but too few make more than expected progress, especially in mathematics, given their starting points. More-able pupils also make expected progress in line with all pupils.
- In the phonics screening test carried out at the end of Year 1, too few pupils reached the national expectations for six-year-olds in 2012 and 2013 and this is reflected in pupils' reading and writing skills. This is because phonics has not been taught systematically across the school and pupils are not given enough opportunities to practise writing and articulating the sounds they learn.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those who are entitled to the pupil premium funding reach slightly lower levels than their peers but make similar progress. There were no pupils eligible for the pupil premium in Year 2 in 2013.
- Pupils enjoy reading and read often at home but their limited knowledge of phonics hampers their fluency across Years 1 and 2. They are encouraged to blend sounds together but too few pupils can confidently sight read commonly used words which would aid their comprehension of the text. Pupils talked confidently about favourite authors such as 'Julia Donaldson'; many have lots of books at home and have good parental support.
- Pupils leave the school with higher than expected writing levels but the work in pupils' books indicated that there are limited opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces of work in English, or in other subjects across the curriculum. Pupils do not develop writing stamina and often do not write enough, especially across Key Stage 1.
- A small proportion of parents said that they did not receive enough information about the progress their pupils were making.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and not enough is of the highest calibre. Inspectors observed good teaching in the school but much that was observed was not as exciting as it could have been.
- Teachers' planning is over reliant on what the teacher is going to teach and which activities the pupils are going to complete. There are too few examples of planning which use pupils' starting points as a basis for learning. This results in most pupils making no more than expected progress because the work is too easy or too hard and pupils are too reliant on teachers' input.
- In many lessons observed, the pace of learning was too slow and there were pockets of time in some classes when pupils were not learning. Activities did not move smoothly from one to another and if a pupil finished an activity they sometimes had to wait for everyone else to finish.
- All teachers plan lessons diligently, have very good relationships with pupils and mark work regularly. However, especially in mathematics lessons, the learning was mundane and failed to excite the pupils. The work in pupils' books shows that while pupils have targets for improvement they are not used effectively or consistently across the school to move learning forward at a rapid pace.
- The assessments of pupils' abilities are not always accurate because teachers' skills in carrying out this task have not been developed. Teachers have had no opportunity to see good practice in other schools or work with each other and external colleagues to moderate their assessments. Teachers indicated to inspectors that they would welcome this opportunity.
- Teachers have not been involved in professional dialogue about their practice. The feedback they have received has not included the need to focus their work on the learning of different

pupil groups within the class.

- The teaching of a daily phonics lesson is new this term and is already bringing about improvements. Teachers are quickly adapting to this way of working and pupils are enjoying their phonics more.
- The curriculum offers too few opportunities for pupils to develop their mental mathematics and calculation strategies in real life problem-solving activities. In some lessons, pupils are not given enough opportunities to think for themselves or develop their mathematical understanding and fluency. More-able pupils, in particular, are not challenged enough to work independently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils are happy in school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. When they are excited by their learning or fully engaged, behaviour is good. In too many lessons low level chatting and off task behaviour is evident. This goes largely unchecked because the behaviour policy is not consistently applied.
- Pupils behave well around the school, are respectful to adults and help each other. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well through assemblies and the curriculum. Pupils are confident and readily take on extra responsibilities. They are keen to help and support younger pupils.
- The school offers a range of enrichment activities across the school day and pupils are keen to take part in these. Pupils talked enthusiastically about clubs they have attended in the past.
- Pupils know right from wrong and say that there is little bullying in the school. Where it does occur, it is low level pushing and shoving in the playground. Pupils were unaware of different forms of prejudice based bullying and had a limited understanding of people who were different from themselves. There are no recorded incidents of racist or derogatory language.
- Parents are supportive of the school but a small proportion feel that bullying is not dealt with fairly; inspectors did not find evidence of this. However, the school does not routinely record all incidents of bullying and this would be useful so that the school could analyse any patterns in bullying and report this to parents. Parents also felt that communication with the school could be greatly improved.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The school has undergone recent turbulence at senior leadership level which is currently unresolved. The governing body, in partnership with the local authority and the diocese, have brought in acting headteachers from neighbouring schools.
- The acting headteacher, who started in September, has hit the ground running. She has carried out a thorough audit of provision and has quickly identified what needs doing to move this school to good. She has the full support of the staff and the governing body.
- In the past, senior leaders have focused their monitoring on what the teacher was doing rather than how much progress pupils in different groups were making. This has resulted in teachers receiving insufficient feedback about the progress of pupils in lessons.
- The school receives a very small amount of pupil premium funding which has been used to improve pupils' basic skills. This shows the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. There are no patterns of underachievement for these pupils across the school.
- The newly introduced sports funding from the government has been allocated to provide curriculum enrichment activities and professional development for staff. This is in order to improve pupils sporting achievements and their involvement in high quality sporting activity.
- Teachers in the school who have leadership responsibility, are keen to support the acting headteacher and she has drawn up a plan of support and professional development to improve these teachers' skills in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

- The acting headteacher has an accurate view of teaching and learning across the school and is able to give teachers clear feedback and areas for development which will accelerate their progress.
- The curriculum is varied and includes many opportunities for pupils to engage in art and music as well as other cultural activities which develop pupils' spiritual awareness.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet current statutory requirements.
- The governing body have not always been well served by the local authority, as reports read during the inspection gave an inflated view of what was happening in the school. This made it difficult for governors to know which questions to ask.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has not routinely ensured that policies and the school website are up-to-date and meet requirements. Performance management arrangements have not been robust enough and governors have not held senior leaders and teachers to account, over a number of years, for the progress of pupils in the school. They have relied on information from external agencies which gave them misleading information. The governing body has been recently strengthened with a new Chair and new co-opted members who are experienced in the skills needed to bring about rapid improvement.

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	122287
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	425979

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	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Lowans
Acting Headteacher	Julie Shields
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2009
Telephone number	01434 632534
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