

Mowbray First School

Stakeford Lane, Guide Post, Choppington, Northumberland, NE62 5HQ

Inspection dates 15–16 October 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		Good	2
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

- Rates of pupils' progress have been inconsistent across all year groups over time and too few pupils exceed the expected levels of progress.
- Not enough teaching is good or better because teachers' planning does not cater sufficiently for pupils' different abilities.
- Assessment information is not used well enough by teachers and leaders to provide a clear understanding of how much progress pupils are making.
- Marking does not always make it clear to pupils how they can improve their work and teachers do not ensure that pupils have opportunities to edit and improve their work.
- While leaders have an understanding of how to improve the school, they do not check carefully enough that their actions are making improvements to pupils' learning.
- Leaders do not monitor teaching and learning with sufficient frequency and performance management arrangements have not been carried out robustly.
- Since the last inspection, senior leaders, governors and local authority personnel have failed to identify that the school has not improved sufficiently.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught well and make good progress, supported by stimulating indoor and outdoor learning areas.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is promoted extremely well through the curriculum and a range of well-considered and well-planned activities.
- The support for pupils with special educational needs is well focused and helps them to make good progress.
- There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils are very confident that adults in the school help them to learn and keep them safe.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is good at all times and sometimes it is outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 10 lessons taught by nine teachers, two of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. They also listened to pupils read and carried out observations of a number of phonics sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and assistant headteacher, subject leaders for literacy and numeracy, and with teachers responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage and for teaching and learning. They also had discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body, vice-chair and one other governor, and with the senior adviser from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including the school’s view of its own performance, local authority reviews of performance and standards, monitoring records, information about pupils’ attainment and progress, improvement planning, pupils’ books, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of behaviour and attendance, the school website, and records relating to safeguarding.
- Discussions were held with two groups of pupils about the quality of their educational experience and the standard of behaviour. Inspectors spoke with other pupils and their parents at social times, at the breakfast club, and at the beginning of school.
- Inspectors took account of the 52 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 24 staff questionnaires.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school’s view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

David Brown, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
James Hannah	Additional Inspector
Anne Vernon	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school caters for pupils aged from three to nine years old.
- The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve all teaching to good or better so that pupils make faster progress, by:
 - embedding the use of tracking information and targets to ensure that lesson planning and delivery takes full account of pupils' differing levels of ability and precisely identifies when underachievement occurs
 - improving teachers' marking so that pupils are given clear, regular and helpful feedback on their work so they understand how to improve
 - sharing best practice across the school so that all lessons are well planned, exciting and challenging.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school, including the governing body, by:
 - setting clear timescales and deadlines for improvement, together with well-defined targets by which to measure success so that the pace of school improvement increases
 - using lesson observations more robustly to ensure that teachers receive accurate feedback that helps them to improve and holds them directly accountable for the progress that pupils make
 - improving communication with parents by ensuring that the school website contains accurate and up-to-date information
 - ensuring that governors develop the skills required to challenge the school more rigorously by taking part and responding to an external review of governance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The majority of children join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are broadly as expected for their age. However, for a minority of children, their personal, social and emotional development and their skills in communication, language and literacy are well below expectations. By the end of the Reception Year, children have progressed well and almost all are at least in line with expectations for their age.
- Last year's assessments of Year 1 pupils in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) showed a significant improvement from the previous year although a below average proportion of pupils met national expectations. Improvements in the teaching of reading throughout the school are helping to improve pupils' early reading skills and encouraging pupils to read more widely.
- The school has recently adopted a much more accurate approach to assessment, particularly at the end of Key Stage 1. This indicates that, by the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is broadly average. In Years 3 and 4, pupils make expected progress so that, by the time they leave school, they have reached broadly average standards. However, given their starting points, too few are making more than this expected rate of progress. This is the chief reason why achievement is not yet good.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The pupil premium is used effectively throughout the school. For example, the additional support provided by teaching assistants is helping individuals and small groups of pupils to catch up with other pupils in the school. The school is committed to ensuring every child has equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. The tasks set for pupils are at times too easy and do not build on pupils' prior learning. Many lessons move at too slow a pace, do not challenge more-able pupils and do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills within extended writing.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and is characterised by high quality questioning by adults. A wide range of activities and resources are available and many of these are exciting and demanding and encourage children to develop a love of learning.
- In the best lessons, pupils are actively engaged and challenged in their learning through discussion and shared tasks. This accelerates their progress as they respond to the high expectations of the teacher and learn from each other. For example, in a Years 3 and 4 numeracy lesson, pupils were encouraged to review their learning to consider how they had achieved the correct answer rather than simply accept it as correct. Pupils could select from a range of tasks designed to develop both their mathematical skills and their ability to work independently.
- Similarly in a good literacy lesson, pupils made good progress because the teacher skilfully designed tasks which closely met different pupils' abilities and rapidly moved their learning forward.
- Marking gives praise and shows pupils what is right and wrong, but in most cases gives very little guidance on how pupils could improve their work. When comments are more detailed and supportive, pupils are not given time to read and respond to them so sometimes repeat the same errors.
- Teaching assistants are used well in lessons to support learning, particularly for lower-ability pupils and those who have special educational needs. They skilfully support pupils' learning by helping them to develop and use their literacy and numeracy skills and to contribute fully in lessons.
- Teaching makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development, particularly in supporting them in reflecting, working well together and listening attentively to others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is consistently good and at times outstanding. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good and this reflects well on pupils' enjoyment of school and their positive attitudes towards their learning.
- There is a very calm and positive atmosphere throughout the school and relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils treat each other with respect and care.
- Pupils feel safe in school and have a clear understanding of what makes an unsafe situation. They were able to talk knowledgeably about e-safety and the dangers of internet sites and chat rooms.
- Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils are well prepared to deal with all types of bullying and name-calling. They were keen to point out that if this does occur the staff deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils are aware of different forms of prejudice based bullying. There are no recorded incidents of racist behaviour.
- Pupils understand the school's high expectations and the sanctions that are fairly applied on the few occasions when individual pupils do not behave well. Parents agree that their children feel safe and enjoy school.
- The school offers an extensive range of enrichment activities both during and after the school day. Pupils talked enthusiastically about the large range of sports, arts and music clubs they are able to attend.
- The school has well-established procedures to promote good attendance. Attendance has improved in recent years but remains slightly below the national average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the pace of change has not led to sufficient improvement in raising pupils' achievement and strengthening the quality of teaching.
- The headteacher and assistant headteacher are clear about what needs to be done to drive improvement, and have made some important decisions about what is required, but they are over-optimistic about what has been achieved. They do not always check carefully enough on the actions they have taken and whether these are leading to improvements in teaching and learning.
- Leaders and teachers do not review pupils' progress frequently enough so that shortfalls in pupils' learning can be spotted and tackled quickly.
- Checks on the quality of teaching have not been challenging or rigorous enough to bring about rapid improvement. Leaders are aware of what needs to be done to improve teaching but current reviews are too generous and do not focus on the link between the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- 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. All pupils are encouraged to play an instrument and many are part of the school brass band.
- The newly introduced Primary School Sports funding from the government is being used to develop a partnership with middle and high schools in the area in order to improve the quality of provision and offer further opportunities for out-of-school activities and competitive sport and to provide professional development for staff.
- All statutory policies relating to the safeguarding of pupils are in place and are effective.
- The governing body has not been well served by the local authority, as reports seen during the

inspection gave an inaccurate and inflated view of what was happening in the school. The local authority does provide a very detailed annual school profile but the value of this document is reduced by the lack of any accompanying explanation or evaluation for senior leaders and governors. This makes it difficult for governors to know which questions to ask.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors do not have the capacity to monitor the work of the school and to challenge leadership. Minutes of governing body meetings show that some issues, such as financial matters, are discussed thoroughly, but at times governors have accepted senior leaders' evaluations of the school without questioning them in detail or understanding fully what they are being told. There is little evidence of governors holding the school's leaders to account, particularly in terms of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Too often, governors fail to provide enough challenge to leaders. The governing body has not routinely ensured that policies and the school website are up-to-date and meet requirements.

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	122243
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	425980

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Moody
Headteacher	Christine Ramm
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2009
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