

Newsham Primary School

Warwick Street, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 4NX

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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

- Not enough pupils exceed the progress expected of them, especially in early reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, levels of achievement are not high enough and attainment in English is broadly average at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' skills in making sense of letters and sounds that form words are underdeveloped in Years 1 and 2.
- Too little teaching is good or better, because teachers do not match activities closely enough to the varied abilities and needs of pupils, including the most able.
- Lessons are sometimes mundane and lack that essential vitality to create high levels of interest, and foster critical thinking and problem solving.
- Teachers' practice when assessing what pupils know, understand and can accomplish is not always accurate and reliable.
- The pace of improvement to address underachievement in Years 1 and 2 has not been fast enough. This is because self-evaluation is at times overgenerous particularly when assessing the impact of teaching.
- Senior and middle leaders have not always been quick enough to tackle and eradicate pockets of underachievement. School improvement planning does not always contain precise and measurable targets.
- Governors and local authority staff have, over a number of years, failed to provide sufficient drive and challenge to secure a trend of rapid school improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The dedication and commitment of the headteacher ensures that pupils receive high-quality care and support.
- Children make a flying start in Nursery and Reception where their teaching is good.
- Most pupils make good progress in mathematics to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils are keen to learn when lessons are lively, thought-provoking and challenging.
- Good spiritual, moral and social development permeates the whole school, underpinning the pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 22 lessons including six paired observations and paired work scrutiny with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and learning walks around the school in order to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspectors held discussions with pupils, parents, five members of the governing body, school staff, including those with responsibilities for subjects, the School Improvement Adviser and an independent training consultant.
- The inspector took account of the 28 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspectors observed the work of the school and examined a range of documentation including the school's own records of pupils' current progress, records from the observation of lessons, pupils' books and school improvement planning. Records relating to behaviour, racist incidents, complaints, attendance and documents relating to safeguarding were also taken into consideration.
- 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

Clive Petts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lucie Stephenson	Additional Inspector
Belita Scott	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Newsham is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- Currently, a well-above average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and children from service families.
- Almost all pupils are from White British communities with very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school extends its services in that it provides a breakfast club each morning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve all teaching to good or better to speed up pupils' progress and raise standards of attainment by:
 - ensuring that more is expected and demanded of pupils of all ages, abilities and needs
 - teaching daily phonics (the sounds that letters represent) sessions for younger pupils that are demanding, brisk and lively, and provide opportunities for every pupil to make sense of new words, practise new sounds as well as practise their spelling and writing
 - planning lesson tasks that take full account of each pupils' starting points and are closely matched to their abilities and needs
 - making certain that more teachers adopt the thought-provoking methods that exist in the school to spark pupils' imagination, including when they are writing, and increase the level of challenge in lessons
 - providing more opportunities for pupils of all ages to apply their skills, think critically, solve problems and fully explain their ideas and solutions
 - using questions relentlessly to stretch pupils' thinking and check what they know and can do
 - improving the accuracy of teachers' marking and using target-setting more effectively to drive up standards.
- Improve the impact of all leaders and managers, including the governing body, by:
 - making certain school improvement planning includes unmistakable and precise quantifiable outcomes, within defined timescales, so that the impact of improvement initiatives on pupils' outcomes can be checked and measured
 - sharpening lesson observations to make sure teachers and classroom support assistants receive accurate feedback about the quality of pupils' learning and their progress in lessons with clearly defined areas for development
 - ensuring that middle leaders receive good training, support and guidance to enhance their skills in checking and judging the quality of teaching and learning and tackling any weaknesses in their areas
 - improving the assessment skills of teachers when judging pupils' progress, achievement and attainment across the school, through high-quality training and experience of best practice in similar settings
 - developing the skills of governors so that they can challenge the school more robustly.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because not enough is done in Key Stage 1 to build upon the good start that children have made in the Nursery and Reception classes. Achievement in mathematics has improved, but progress in English across the school is too inconsistent and pupils attain broadly average standards in English at the end of Year 6.
- At the end of Year 2, unvalidated data for 2013 show that attainment in all subjects is significantly below average. In the phonics screening test carried out at the end of Year 1, too few pupils reach the national standards for six-year-olds. This is evident in the below average reading and writing skills and is the result of phonics not being taught methodically enough.
- In addition, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to practise their writing and articulate the letter sounds that they learn. Consequently, progress requires improvement as the basic skills successfully acquired in the Nursery and Reception are not being effectively added to at a fast enough rate as pupils move through the school.
- By the end of Year 6, although progress rates are better, a pattern of swift and consistent progress across all ability groups and subjects has yet to be established. Most pupils make good progress in mathematics to reach above average standards. Increased numbers of the most-able pupils are reaching higher levels. Yet, in English, standards are broadly average with variable rates of progress across different pupil groups. Too few pupils exceed what is expected of them, including the most-able pupils. As a result, progress and achievement of all groups of pupils require improvement, particularly in English.
- Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates because, although their needs are usually carefully identified and gaps in their learning pinpointed, they experience the same uneven teaching as other pupils.
- Although those pupils who are entitled to pupil premium make broadly similar progress overall to those not in receipt of the funding, the pattern is uneven. Currently, the attainment of those pupils eligible for free school meals in mathematics is one term ahead of other pupils in the school, the same attainment as in writing, but is over one term behind in their reading. This is because teaching of reading has not been strong enough to accelerate progress to exceed expected levels.
- Younger pupils enjoy reading, but do not practise often enough both in school and at home. Their underdeveloped phonics skill hampers their confidence and fluency in Years 1 and 2. Older pupils talk confidently about their favourite authors and themes and many have much reading material at home.
- The school has taken positive action to accelerate pupils' progress and this can be seen in the improvements in mathematics. Nevertheless, opportunities are sometimes missed to apply their mathematical skills to ever more demanding problems. The standard of writing is improving, but progress developing their extended, imaginative writing is not yet fast enough.
- Children start Nursery with skills and knowledge below that typical for their age. A small minority of children have underdeveloped speech, language, social and emotional skills. Children make rapid progress developing early confidence, self-control and independence in the happy, friendly atmosphere.
- In both the Nursery and Reception, children display an eagerness to learn and good levels of concentration, exploring for themselves. An interesting and thought-provoking range of activities ensures children make good progress working towards the goals expected of them for their age.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- There was some good teaching seen during the inspection. Nevertheless, a significant proportion observed was judged to require improvement because the challenge and pace in lessons was too variable. No teaching was inadequate. The scrutiny of pupils' work in books and school progress information over time confirm this judgement.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, although their skills in teaching phonics are underdeveloped. Although they enjoy very good relationships with pupils, their overall impact on pupils' achievement is not good enough to ensure they learn at a fast rate, especially in Years 1 and 2. This is because available assessment information is not used skilfully enough to closely match activities to pupils' starting points and their abilities and needs. This results in work which is too hard or too easy.
- Where teaching requires improvement too few demands are made of pupils, including the most able, throughout the lesson. Teaching methods lack that essential spark that inspires pupils, including when they are writing. Some teachers talk for too long reducing the time that pupils have to practise their skills independently. Pupils are sometimes too dependent on the teacher or the classroom support assistant and are not taught how to think for themselves and to solve problems. Questioning does not always make sure that pupils fully explain their ideas and is not closely tailored to pupils' individual needs and abilities.
- Marking is regular and is sometimes helpful, but teachers' judgements of pupils' knowledge and understanding are not consistently accurate. This is because the assessment skills of teachers are underdeveloped. Although some pupils have targets for improvement in their books, they are not used relentlessly enough by teachers to drive learning forward at a faster pace.
- When teaching is good and progress is quickest staff set high expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve. They arrange activities that are tailored to individual abilities and relentlessly build upon earlier learning and allow pupils to work independently or with a partner to exchange ideas, but there are too many lessons without these features.
- In lessons when achievement is highest, interesting and imaginative use is made of themes to trigger and excite pupils' thinking. For example, preparing a fact sheet for a stegosaurus prior to a visit to a dinosaur exhibition. Skilful use of questions and prompts inspires pupils to imagine life in the Jurassic period.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults provide high-quality care and support in interesting and welcoming environments. This helps children to confidently explore, investigate and pursue their curiosity. As a result, children settle quickly to become self-assured, finding things out for themselves.
- Despite positive improvements in numeracy, insufficient emphasis is placed in developing literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of the curriculum, especially in Years 1 and 2.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' good and occasionally excellent behaviour in classrooms and at social times creates a happy, friendly school atmosphere. Staff take the lead from the headteacher and provide excellent role models. Consequently, pupils are considerate, kind and thoughtful. All are well aware of the boundaries that are set for their conduct.
- The breakfast club provides a calm start to the day. Pupils are happy in school and this is reflected in their improving pattern of attendance. The high-quality care and support provided for pupils is underpinned by their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They enjoy very good relationships with their friends and thrive on the responsibilities they are given, especially supporting and helping younger children.
- Discussions with pupils reveal that they are well-informed about different forms of bullying, including when using new technology and verbal and physical intimidations. They comment that staff are always on hand to share any worries and concerns they may have. They report that staff action is prompt on the rare occasions it is required. Staff records and parent feedback

confirm this to be the case.

- The school has made concerted efforts to improve attendance which was low at the time of the previous inspection. Routines to manage attendance work well. Consequently, attendance is regularly above average and persistent absence has reduced.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher leads the school with commitment and zeal. All staff share her enthusiasm. Senior leaders have successfully secured some important improvements, such as raising pupils' achievement in mathematics. However, leadership and management are not yet good because the pockets of underachievement in English, especially in Years 1 and 2, have not been tackled uncompromisingly enough.
- Although specialist consultant training is improving the skills of leaders and governors to evaluate school information, senior leaders are not sharply focused on checking and measuring the impact of the actions taken to speed up pupils' progress and raise their achievement. Consequently, self-evaluation is overgenerous.
- Monitoring of lessons by senior leaders is routinely carried out, but judgements of the quality of learning are not linked well enough to the progress that pupils in different groups are making. Teachers and classroom support assistants do not always receive clear feedback on their teaching therefore they are unsure about how to accelerate pupils' progress in lessons. Furthermore, teachers' practice when assessing what pupils know, understand and can accomplish is not always precise or consistent.
- Improvement planning lacks clear-cut priorities and timescales, for example, in ensuring that teachers always use accurate assessment information to tailor tasks to meet all abilities and the specific needs of pupil groups or individuals.
- Middle leaders are developing their confidence and skills, but they do not check their areas of responsibility rigorously enough and ensure that the initiatives that are adopted always lead to rapid improvement in pupils' performance. They are not yet skilled enough in judging the quality of teaching and learning and tackling any weaknesses in their area.
- Teaching is competently organised. Training is thoughtfully planned by the headteacher to address weakness. The use of specialist expertise and the Improvement Adviser is having an increasingly positive effect, though the impact has not been fast enough. Opportunities have been missed to use best practice in schools with similar settings to inform staff and enable them to make more rapid improvements in their practice.
- The current external Improvement Adviser has a sound grasp of the school's current performance. Appropriate support activities are undertaken during termly visits. Recent action by the headteacher to use specialist consultants is adding to the momentum of improvement. Nevertheless, over time, the headteacher and the governing body have received inadequate challenge and support from the local authority to ensure a much faster rate of school improvement.
- Pupil premium funding is used to improve basic skills, but the pattern of improvement is uneven. The recently introduced sport funding has been allocated to enrich the range of sporting activity, enhance teachers' skills, increase participation levels and foster higher performance.
- The curriculum is increasingly varied and rich using themes, such as pirates and dinosaurs, to link subjects together in more interesting ways. Good use is made of visits and visitors to enhance experiences. However, the application and practising of basic skills is not firmly enough embedded in all subjects.
- Not all groups of pupils achieve equally well as the quality of teaching does not meet the needs of all the pupils precisely enough. Although the school tackles any discrimination promptly, equality of opportunity requires improvement.
- Parents play an active part in their children's personal development and really appreciate the lengths to which the school goes to support their children, including those that are potentially vulnerable. In individual cases the school support is exceptional.

■ Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with best practice underpinning the high-quality care and support provided for children.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is committed and supportive. Its members care about the school and its place at the heart of the local community. Despite their dedication, their involvement in performance management arrangements has not been strong enough over time. Governors have not challenged senior and middle leaders sufficiently and held teachers robustly to account for pupils' rate of progress and levels of achievement. Additionally, they have not thoroughly investigated whether the way the pupil premium is spent is having a positive impact on outcomes for this group of pupils. They have relied upon performance information which has not provided an accurate picture of the impact of strategies to address underperformance. Although recent training on interpreting information and school data has had a positive impact on governor confidence and expertise, it has not, as yet, brought about a clear trend of faster school 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	122261
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	425845

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	431
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Grant Davey
Headteacher	Anne-Marie Armstrong
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2011
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