

Otterburn First School

Otterburn, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE19 1JF

Inspection dates 23–24 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- While achievement at the end of Year 2 is generally good in reading and mathematics, pupils' attainment in writing, especially for the most able, is not as high as it should be.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are not making the progress of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics and writing.
- Not all teaching is good because work is not always accurately matched to pupils' abilities and they are often not provided with essential resources in order to enhance learning.
- The quality of teaching and learning is not checked regularly enough by the headteacher.
- Subject leaders in English and mathematics have not been sufficiently trained to fulfil their roles and this has inhibited the drive to secure improvements.
- The local authority has not been effective in challenging the school over time nor in supporting the acting headteacher since the beginning of the current term.

The school has the following strengths

- A supportive and caring staff provide a welcoming environment where pupils feel safe.
- Pupils behave well during lessons and are developing positive working habits.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs supports their development well.
- The revitalised governing body is determined to check the work of the school closely, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed parts of seven lessons, two of which were undertaken with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders, members of the governing body, the school improvement adviser and pupils. A telephone conversation was also held with a senior representative of the local authority.
- The inspector heard pupils read and looked at a range of pupils' work including their literacy and mathematics books.
- The inspector examined a range of documentation, including the school's data pertaining to pupils' progress, the school self-evaluation and improvement plan, records relating to the checking of teaching and learning, the performance management process and how the pupil premium funding is administered.
- The inspector took account of the twenty-two responses to the online survey, Parent View, and the questionnaires completed by five members of staff.
- During this inspection, the inspector 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

Christopher Keeler, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school with three classes. The number of pupils in each year group is very small.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds
- A below-average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils, or those with special educational needs, supported at school action or school action plus is below the national average. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- Very few pupils are 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 from service families and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The previous headteacher retired at the end of the summer term 2013. The governing body was unable to appoint a replacement in time for the beginning of the new academic year in September 2013. As a result, a member of the current staff is the acting headteacher until a permanent appointment is made. When the inspection took place, she had only been in post for seven weeks.
- A new teacher commenced at the beginning of the autumn term 2013 and is responsible for a Year 3 and 4 class.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better and pupils make good progress, by ensuring:
 - teachers identify what pupils are capable of more accurately and plan work that is well-matched to their abilities and that the level of challenge is appropriate
 - that pupils are stimulated and motivated to learn through well-planned activities that enable them to engage fully in their learning
 - all adults that support pupils during lessons know exactly what to do and are deployed on activities that reflect their experience and expertise in order to support pupils effectively.
- Improve pupils' achievement in writing by:
 - ensuring that pupils, particularly those in Years 3 and 4, write at length more often and have further planned opportunities to apply their skills in a range of subjects
 - placing even greater emphasis on spelling and punctuation
 - ensuring that pupils have immediate access to all the necessary resources to help them with their writing
 - teachers having higher expectations of pupils' handwriting.
- Improve pupils' progress and achievement in mathematics in Years 3 and 4 by:
 - ensuring that pupils have quick recall of their multiplication tables and are able to use them confidently when undertaking work in different aspects of mathematics
 - continuing to develop pupils' ability to apply basic mathematical operations to solve problems.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders by:
 - ensuring that frequent checks on teachers' performance in the classroom and the impact it is

- having on pupils' progress are undertaken on a regular basis through a variety of strategies
- ensuring that the school improvement plan is completed and is an appropriate and effective vehicle to secure improvement
 - further developing the role of subject leaders so that they are able to make a greater contribution to school improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- When children commence school, their skills and knowledge are broadly typical for their age. They get off to a good start and, by the time they enter Year 1, the majority are equipped to access the National Curriculum.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have not made the progress expected of them over time because expectations have not been high enough. While they are, for the most part, performing in line with national expectations, progress in mathematics and writing is not as good as it should be given their starting points at the end of Year 2.
- In Key Stage 2, many pupils lack the confidence and skills to write at length with accurate spelling and punctuation. Furthermore, the quality of handwriting is not good enough. Pupils do not demonstrate a secure grasp of multiplication tables and are sometimes unsure about the application of basic operations when solving mathematical problems. This is supported by pupils' responses during lessons and a scrutiny of their work.
- Pupils make generally good progress during Key Stage 1 and, by the end of Year 2, a significant proportion of pupils attain the higher levels in reading and mathematics. However, progress in writing is not as good as in the other subjects and the number of pupils attaining the higher levels in writing is not as high as it should be.
- The teaching of phonics (the practice of linking letters and sounds) is well organised and is helping pupils to read with increased fluency. This is particularly noticeable in Years 1 and 2, where pupils apply their knowledge of phonics well. This is helping to develop confident readers and fostering a love of books.
- Those very few pupils benefitting from pupil premium funding and those with special educational needs are making generally good progress as indicated by school-held data and pupils' work. This is helping to reduce the gap in respect of pupils nationally.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching ranges from that which requires improvement to good, and elements of good practice are evident in all classes. If pupils are to make the progress of which they are undoubtedly capable and achieve highly in all subjects, then the overall quality of teaching needs to be of a consistently good standard.
- In Years 3 and 4, expectations are now appropriately high and planned work is more accurately focused on gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. However, this has not yet helped all pupils to catch up on where they should be in their work given their previous underachievement.
- Pupils make good progress when: teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving; lessons are well-planned to meet pupils' learning needs; pupils' misconceptions are identified during lessons and they are enthused and motivated, allowing them to engage fully in their learning. Pupils make good progress in writing when they have immediate access to the tools necessary for them to complete the task set. These aspects of teaching are not consistent features of classroom practice.
- Teachers do try to challenge pupils' thinking and sometimes it works well and pupils prosper. But, sometimes, the degree of challenge is too great and this reflects a lack of accurate assessment and a lack of understanding of the steps in learning that are required if higher skills and understanding are to be realised.
- The teaching assistant provides good support, particularly when delivering intervention programmes to those pupils identified as needing extra attention.
- On occasions, with the exception of the teaching assistant, the deployment of voluntary adult support during lessons is not managed effectively because pupils do not benefit from unskilled and inexperienced supervision.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are courteous and polite when addressing each other and adults, including visitors to the school.
- Pupils are given responsibilities and undertake them seriously and conscientiously and this enhances their personal development.
- During lessons, pupils listen carefully to their teachers and do what they are asked but no more. They are calm and compliant and this reflects the progress they are making. They are keen to participate in lessons. However, when they are not sufficiently stimulated and appropriately challenged, they are not able to use their personal qualities to good effect, for example, to listen, work co-operatively, enquire and question.
- Pupils feel safe and enjoy school. They have a good awareness of different types of bullying and know about internet safety. Pupils are extremely confident that staff would intervene on their behalf if they were unhappy.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The acting headteacher has only been in post a matter of weeks and has a significant teaching commitment. She is acutely aware that areas of the school need improving and is in the process of reviewing all areas of the school's work.
- The school improvement plan is incomplete, partly due to the short time she has been in post and, to a greater extent, to a lack of managerial experience and support at this level. Nevertheless, she is able to articulate clearly the key areas that require improvement in relation to leadership and management and achievement with specific reference to writing and mathematics.
- Teachers have not been subjected to regular and rigorous monitoring of their work and this must be addressed if teaching is to improve. The current leadership is aware of this and plans are in place to make this a feature that not only ensures that agreed practices are being consistently applied and teaching is of a required standard but also supports the development of teachers' skills.
- Performance management is in place; teachers' development targets focus on their areas of responsibility. The inclusion of individual targets in relation to the development of teaching skills are currently being considered.
- The subject leaders for English and mathematics have good subject knowledge and an understanding of what aspects of each subject require attention. They are keen to work with the acting headteacher and make a significant contribution to driving and securing improvements throughout the school. Appropriate professional development, particularly in planning for improvement and monitoring provision, is in hand and this is designed to enable them to fulfil their roles increasingly effectively.
- Pupil premium funding is well managed. As a result, staff are confident in delivering a range of intervention programmes which enable the very small number of pupils entitled to this support to make enhanced progress. This reflects the school's determination to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination.
- The school has received funding allocated to support primary school sport. Pupils currently receive specialist support for physical education which is enabling them to acquire new skills and develop confidence and enjoyment.
- The impact of the local authority's support and challenge over time has been inconsistent. Some elements of support have been stronger than others. Good support was given to the governing body over the search for a new headteacher even though after much deliberation, a decision was taken not to appoint. Similarly, the advice and support about financial management has been well received. But support and challenge for the new and inexperienced acting headteacher, at a crucial time in the schools' development, has been lacking and is partly responsible for where the school finds itself today. However, plans are proposed whereby

focused management support is to be made available. This is both timely and welcome.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The make-up of the governing body has changed significantly since the previous inspection and there is a better understanding of the members' role and relationship with the school leadership. In the past, the governing body has not been as rigorous as it should have been in checking the work of the school. There is now a strong commitment to ensuring that improvements come about quickly. The Chair of the Governing Body has established a school improvement committee to check the work of the school on a regular basis and hold school leaders to account. Routine visits to school are planned to enable governors to both challenge and support school leaders at all levels in relation to bringing about improvements to teaching and pupils' achievement. Governors are fully aware of how the pupil premium funding is spent and the difference that it makes. Current national guidelines for safeguarding children are followed appropriately. Such is the desire to take the school forward that the governing body is well placed to ensure that the school improves rapidly.

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	122215
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	425996

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	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Shaw
Headteacher	Mrs C Hedley
Date of previous school inspection	25 January 2011
Telephone number	01830 520283
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@otterburn.northumberland.sch.uk

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