

Nenthead Primary School

Nenthead, Alston, Cumbria, CA9 3LS

Inspection dates 5 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement is good. From below average starting points, pupils in Year 6 reach standards that are above those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is typically good and there is some that is outstanding.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and exceptionally well around the school. They say that they feel very safe and show that they care for each other in all that they do.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and is promoted very well through a range of activities.
- The federation's headteacher is effective and together with the equally effective assistant headteacher and leaders at other levels she has worked extremely hard to improve the quality of teaching, raise the achievement of pupils and improve pupils' behaviour.
- Members of the effective governing body make a strong contribution to school improvement. They use their skills and expertise well to provide strategic direction for the work of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all of the teaching is as good as the best yet. The excellent practice that exists within the school and the federation is not shared consistently between all the staff.
- Pupils' achievement in writing, especially that of boys, is not as high as it is in reading and mathematics because they do not always plan what they are going to write before they start their work.
- Some of the school's improvement plans do not have precise enough measures of how the success of actions can be judged or appropriate timescales for their completion.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed five lessons, one of which was a joint observation with the assistant headteacher. They listened to pupils read in Years 2 and 6.
- Inspectors took account of 18 responses to the on-line survey (Parent View) and five questionnaires completed by the staff. Some parents and carers were spoken to informally around the school.
- They held a meeting with pupils from Years 3 to 6 and talked informally with pupils at lunchtimes and break times. Inspectors also talked to members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. They also held discussions with a senior leader, the special educational needs coordinator and the leader of mathematics.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and looked at a range of documentation including internal and external information relating to pupils' progress, their workbooks, school improvement planning and the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance. They also considered reports written by the local authority, documents relating to the management of teachers' performance, minutes of the governing body meetings and safeguarding and child protection documents.

Inspection team

Peter Eeva, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Julie McGrane

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school. It has been federated with Alston Primary School since 2006. The two schools share the same headteacher and governing body. The headteacher is based at Alston Primary School and the assistant headteacher is based at Nenthead. Other leadership responsibilities are spread across the two schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is much lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is smaller than average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The number of children in each year group is much lower than average and pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes.
- There have been some staffing changes recently.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing further, especially that of boys, by making sure that pupils are able to plan what they are going to write before they start.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that the very best practice which exists within the school and the federation is shared among all staff.
- Improve leadership at all levels by ensuring that improvement plans are sufficiently precise to allow the progress and success of actions to be judged effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The very small numbers of pupils in each year group means that each pupil has a disproportionate effect on overall results in national tests. The movement of pupils into and out of the school and the variable starting points makes comparison between different years difficult and this tends to mask the real picture of pupils' good achievement from their different starting points.
- Although there are currently no children in the Reception Year, children typically achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They get off to a good start in linking letters to the sounds they make and are becoming good readers. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage many write sentences using correct grammar with growing confidence and are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- In Key Stage 1 pupils continue to make good progress and attainment is rising. The school's data and pupils' work show that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is now above that typically expected for their age showing good achievement from their starting points.
- By the end of Year 6 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average. This represents good progress from their previous lower starting points. Although progress in writing is good, it is not as good as it is in reading and mathematics. Pupils do not always plan what they are going to write before they start and so some writing lacks the correct structure.
- Pupils' learning in lessons is good. They have very positive attitudes to learning and quickly gain the knowledge and skills they need to improve further, particularly in reading and mathematics. They work very well together in groups and pairs and make good use of opportunities to discuss their ideas with others which helps them to consolidate their understanding.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy reading throughout the school. They use their phonic knowledge well (sounds and the letters they represent) to tackle unfamiliar words, and as a result, pupils across the school are reading above the expected levels for their age. Books are everywhere and pupils and adults alike have a shared love of reading.
- In mathematics lessons, pupils make good progress particularly when they are given challenging problem-solving activities and opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to real situations.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers and sometimes better progress. They receive well-targeted support, mainly within the classroom, from adults who know and understand their needs very well.
- Boys and girls make similar progress and attain equally well. The most able pupils also make good progress, particularly when challenging work is set for them. In a mathematics lesson, for example, pupils relished and rose to the challenge set for them in solving problems related to analogue and digital clocks and skilfully identified and avoided any potential pitfalls. Pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding make similar, and sometimes more rapid, progress to their peers. In 2013, there were too few pupils eligible for pupil premium to comment on their attainment without identifying them. The funding has been used effectively to increase the amount of support for pupils through additional teaching and teaching assistant support, training for staff and the purchase of resources and specific programmes to promote pupils' skills, particularly in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. The improved quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement, enabling them to make good progress.
- Although there are no children currently in the Reception Year group, evidence gathered during the inspection confirms that in the Early Years Foundation Stage children get off to a good start and are provided with interesting indoor and outdoor activities which cover all the areas of

learning. Good attention is paid to developing children's speaking and listening skills which prepares them very well for future learning.

- In those lessons where pupils made outstanding progress, for example, in a mixed-age class with pupils from Years 3 to Year 6, pupils were learning about digital and analogue time. Pupils were given a range of activities that were skilfully planned so that they were hard enough for everyone in the class. Pupils eagerly responded to the challenges presented to them.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons which enthuse pupils. In the class with the youngest children, the pupils confidently used their rapidly developing independence to order parts of a story in preparation for retelling the tale of Burglar Bill.
- There are very good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils cooperate extremely well together in pairs and groups when given opportunities to work together on tasks. Older pupils patiently helped younger pupils but made it quite clear that they would not tell them the answer and they would have to work it out for themselves.
- Teachers use their knowledge of how well pupils have learned in reading and writing to help them to plan activities that are just at the right level to get the best out of pupils in their mixed-age classes. However, while they are keen to write, and often do so at length, some pupils, especially some boys, do not plan their writing and, as a result, the finished product lacks the appropriate structure and parts are sometimes missed out.
- Pupils are encouraged to work together and learn from, as well as with, each other. The mixed ages in each class allow opportunities for pupils to learn in different groups to everyone's benefit. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and behave very well in lessons.
- Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively and carefully guide pupils' learning. They have a clear picture of how different pupils learn, especially those who have special educational needs or disabilities.
- Teachers mark pupils' workbooks regularly and make suggestions about how to improve. Pupils respond to these suggestions and so do not often make the same mistakes in spelling, punctuation or grammar.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They usually behave very well in lessons and behaviour out of lessons is often of a very high order. Occasionally, their attention wanders and some become restless. However, most of the time, pupils come into school eager to learn; they are confident, capable young people who are keen to use every moment in school productively.
- The school has an effective system for encouraging pupils to behave well. All adults follow this system consistently and pupils say that they know how to behave both in and out of lessons and that they expect others to behave equally well.
- In the playground, pupils play well with each other and older pupils show a great deal of care and consideration for younger pupils.
- Pupils say that there is very little, if any, bullying and they know what to do if any should occur. They have a good understanding of the different types of bullying including homophobic bullying.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Procedures for keeping pupils safe are managed efficiently and sensibly. Pupils say that they feel very safe and parents agree that their children feel extremely safe in school. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- Attendance has improved and is now average. The school works very hard to encourage pupils to attend school regularly and on time.
- Pupils appreciate the range of activities and clubs available to them and they especially enjoy the music and sports activities. When asked if there was anything they would change one pupil replied, 'Nothing really. It's pretty much perfect'.
- Through the curriculum, pupils develop a good understanding of different faiths and cultures and show respect and consideration for others. Pupils typically describe the school as, 'One big

family'. There are many opportunities for pupils to express their feelings and to reflect on their learning and behaviour. This does much to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which is a strength of the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led by a determined and effective headteacher ably supported by the assistant headteacher and an ambitious and determined governing body. Together they have guided the school through a period of change.
- There have been improvements in the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils as a result of the concerted action of all staff. However, leaders are yet to ensure that pupils' achievement in writing is as good as it is in reading and mathematics.
- The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development and produces plans with actions to address these. However, the timescales are not precise enough to ensure that improvements take place quickly enough and the measures of success do not allow accurate evaluation of the success of actions.
- The leaders carry out regular checks on the standards of teaching which provides an accurate view of its quality. Where improvements are needed, teachers are able to improve their skills through effective professional development. The links between the management of the performance of teachers and their professional development opportunities are effective and arrangements for pay and promotion of staff are closely linked to their pupils' progress.
- There are thorough systems in place to check on pupils' progress throughout the school. Where there are gaps in their knowledge, understanding or skills the school quickly takes action to boost pupils' learning by providing extra support in small groups or individually, in or out of lessons.
- The school knows and cares for its pupils as individuals and successfully makes sure that all pupils are able to learn. As a result, all pupils have an equal opportunity to do well and there are no gaps in performance between different groups of pupils.
- The curriculum has been developed across the federation to capture pupils' imagination and to promote their involvement in their learning. It ensures that their reading, writing and mathematical skills are well developed across other subjects. A benefit of the federation is the sharing of experienced subject leaders which allows joint planning of different subjects. A further benefit is the potential for sharing the best practice that exists within the federation but this needs to happen more consistently.
- The new primary school sports funding is motivating pupils to be more active and to take part more frequently in a range of activities such as swimming. In addition, the funding is being used to improve the teaching of physical education through further staff training.
- Safeguarding and child protection procedures are very effective and meet all current statutory requirements.
- The local authority has provided valued support which is appreciated by the school. Its recent review helped the federation to improve its effectiveness which has resulted in improvements in all areas.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective and governors are determined to help the school improve further. They have a good knowledge of the school and keep themselves well informed about all aspects of school life, in particular about the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching. They monitor the school's performance and ask challenging questions to promote further development. They have a good understanding of how to challenge and support the two schools equally even though they serve different communities and they make certain that both are equally represented. Governors bring a range of skills which they use to good effect in carrying out their roles. Where there are gaps in their knowledge and skills they make sure that they receive appropriate training. They are ambitious for the further development of the school and the achievement and welfare of the pupils. Governors are familiar with Teachers'

Standards and use them to help manage teachers' performance and award pay increases for good teaching. They oversee the spending of the pupil premium funding and are aware of the positive impact this is having on pupils' achievement. They are also involved in planning the spending of the primary school sports funding and how its impact on the physical well-being will be measured.

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	112116
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	426277

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Karen Morsman
Headteacher	Debbie Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2010
Telephone number	01434 381400
Fax number	Not Applicable
Email address	alstonoffice@alston.cumbria.sch.uk

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