

Fir Ends Primary School

Smithfield, Kirklington, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA6 6AY

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2014

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Early years provision | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Throughout their time in the early years, children develop a genuine eagerness to learn new things. They achieve well.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils have made increasingly good progress across subjects and year groups.
- Pupils who have additional needs are provided with a good level of support and usually make the same good progress as others in school.
- In 2014, the proportions of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment in Year 6 were well above the national average in reading and mathematics. The proportion reaching the higher level in writing was above the national average.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Work is planned to bring out the best in pupils.
- A wide range of subjects and topics engage pupils well. They enjoy being challenged to extend their knowledge and develop their skills. This prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education.
- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The older pupils take on numerous responsibilities and act as excellent role models to the younger children.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They develop a good understanding of how to keep safe beyond school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. For example, they learn about people who have beliefs which are different to their own and celebrate the fact that we are all unique.
- The headteacher has effectively led several whole-school changes since the previous inspection. In a relatively short space of time, there have been significant improvements. Staff work well as a team in supporting pupils' personal development and academic achievement.
- Overall leaders and managers, including the governing body, have secured improvements in the achievement of all groups of pupils and in the quality of teaching. The school continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not always make the same rate of progress in writing as they do in other subjects.
- There are inconsistencies in how well pupils check their work for errors.
- Some middle leaders are at an early stage in developing their areas of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in lessons taught by teachers, two of which were jointly observed with the headteacher. She also observed sessions led by teaching assistants and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with school staff; groups of pupils; the headteacher; governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, development plans, records of pupils' standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils' work in their books.
- There were 18 parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) which were taken into account. The inspector reviewed the school's own parental surveys and 12 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Fir Ends is smaller than the average-sized school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported by the pupil premium, is much lower than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average.
- Almost all pupils are from a White British heritage.
- All pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- The early year's provision is part time in nursery and full time in the Reception class.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been some key changes in staffing. The manager for the early years was appointed in September 2013 and the literacy coordinators took up their roles in September 2014.
- A specialist mathematics consultant from the University of Cumbria has been working with the staff.
- As a result of the previous inspection, monitoring visits have been carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).
- The school supports students from the University of Cumbria who are embarking on their training to become qualified teachers.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning in order to raise pupils' achievement further, particularly in writing, by:
 - ensuring pupils accurately use spelling, punctuation and grammar when they write in subjects other than English
 - developing pupils' skills in checking their work before it is marked by an adult.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management further by developing the skills of relatively new leaders and managers in measuring pupils' progress and taking action to improve provision in their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The dedicated headteacher has galvanised staff and, together with the governing body, they have effectively addressed all of the areas for further improvement since the previous inspection. In a relatively short space of time they have also addressed the areas for further development raised at the monitoring visit of HMI in October, 2013.
- The school improvement plan and self-evaluation are realistic and accurate. Most leaders are effectively using the tracking information showing pupils' progress to ensure targets for individual pupils are always challenging. When additional support is required, this is put into place swiftly and monitored closely. Pupils join different classes for some subjects in order to provide further challenge and speed up their progress.
- Overall, leaders effectively check on the quality of learning and teaching in the school and have a clear view of how they can continue to raise standards. However, some middle leaders are at an early stage in checking on their areas of responsibility and their influence on school improvement is not yet fully developed.
- Teachers, including those who are newly qualified, are well supported to improve the quality of their teaching. This is done through rigorous staff appraisal and the high-quality training they receive. They benefit from opportunities to visit other schools and see outstanding practice.
- The local authority increased its support for the school following the previous inspection. A specialist mathematics consultant from a local university has worked with staff and this has helped the school to improve the quality of the teaching and pupils' achievement in mathematics.
- The very few disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as non-disadvantaged classmates. This is because the pupil premium funding is used effectively. School leaders and all staff demonstrate their commitment to ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of activities both in school and beyond. The residential trips for the older pupils give them the opportunities to develop new skills and grow in confidence through a range of outdoor activities. Pupils excel in sporting competitions, develop a love of the arts and have an excellent grasp of using new technologies.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of British values and are able to make comparisons of religions and cultures different to their own. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- The primary school sport funding is used to good effect to broaden sporting opportunities for pupils, while developing the expertise of staff, using specialist coaches. This has, for example, led to an increase in opportunities for pupils to try activities such as gymnastics, multi-skills and dance. There has been an increase in the uptake and interest in sport since the funding started. Most pupils now take part in a wide range of sporting activities to help them stay healthy and promote their well-being.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring with them a wide range of skills from within and beyond education. Those who spoke to the inspector have a good understanding of data showing pupils' achievement and how this compares with other schools. Each half term they are kept well informed of pupils' achievement by senior and middle leaders. Governors have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching and how it is directly linked to the salary structure of staff. They understand how any underperformance would be tackled. The school's finances are efficiently managed.
 - The local authority are supporting governors as they prepare to hold interviews for a new headteacher following the current headteacher's decision to retire in 2015.
 - Governors are conscientious in the way they undertake their statutory duties. Required checks on adults are recorded and staff are well trained in child protection. Governors make sure safeguarding arrangements meet requirements so that pupils and staff are safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- In lessons and around the school, pupils are extremely courteous towards each other and the adults around them. They wear their uniforms with pride and enjoy learning and playing within the vibrant surroundings that the school provides.
- All parents who spoke to the inspector felt that the behaviour of pupils is of a high standard. This is reflected

in the recent school survey and Parent View. Pupils also share this view.

- Older pupils enjoy a wide range of roles such as prefects, play leaders, librarians and official helpers. This encourages them to take responsibilities for aspects of school life and act as excellent role models for the younger children.
- The outdoor environment is well cared for with pupils periodically undertaking litter patrols. Members of the gardening club sow seeds in the flowerbeds each year in readiness for the summer display, which the local community can enjoy.
- The school council is pro-active in organising fund-raising activities. Pupils talked about raising money for children in Malawi who 'aren't as lucky as we are', which illustrated their understanding of their own lifestyles and their responsibility to consider others in third world countries.
- Attendance is above the national average and improving. Pupils arrive at school on time.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils feel safe because they know that the adults in school care for them well. They also know that they have to be very careful when they use the internet.
- Pupils understand bullying in its different forms. They were confident that there is no bullying at their school and say that if it did take place it would be dealt with quickly. Behaviour logs support this view.
- Representatives from the police, fire service and the National Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children are regular visitors to school and deliver information on keeping safe in a range of situations. This gives pupils a good understanding of how to keep safe in environments beyond school.
- There are good links with external agencies to provide support for pupils and their families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Pupils receive good levels of support from all staff.
- Residential trips to outdoor centres provide older pupils with new experiences. This develops their ability to consider risks in unfamiliar surroundings.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils make good progress because of the effective quality of teaching in a wide range of subjects. This view is supported by lesson observations, work in pupils' books and the school's records of pupils' progress.
- Phonics (the links between letters and sounds) is taught exceptionally well and this has led to year-on-year improvements in pupils' performance in the Year 1 screening checks. Those who read to the inspector showed how well they could blend the sounds of different letters to work out unfamiliar words. Pupils develop a love of books from an early age and this was seen first-hand during the inspection.
- At the previous inspection, mathematics was identified as an area for further improvement and leaders have diligently embarked on developing opportunities across subjects to improve the numeracy skills of pupils. They are encouraged to save money at school and during morning break on the first day of this inspection, pupils formed an orderly queue to withdraw money from their personal accounts. This then allowed them to buy books from the book fair. Not only was the book fair encouraging pupils to read a range of genres and authors, it encouraged pupils to use their mental mathematics skills in working out what things cost, the amount of change that they needed and how much was left in their accounts.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils were seen diligently measuring angles and working out totals of angles from a range of shapes. Pupils considered where they could see angles in the classroom and after numerous examples, exclaimed 'they're everywhere!' When pupils were asked what use knowing and measuring angles would be in the world of work, pupils referred to builders and many other professions, which made their learning relevant to real life.
- There are opportunities for writing across a range of subjects. In science, pupils record their findings from experiments which helps them to use their literacy skills. However, although pupils achieve well in spelling, punctuation and grammar tests, they do not always apply these skills accurately in subjects other than English. There are inconsistencies in how thoroughly pupils check their work for errors before it is marked by the teacher.
- A whole-school approach to marking is now embedded. Marking is of a high quality and pupils routinely respond to comments written by adults and correct and edit their work as requested.
- Effective teamwork by teachers and teaching assistants ensures a high level of support for all groups of pupils.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected level in the Year 1 reading screening check is higher than the national average. This is because teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in the teaching of phonics. The few pupils who struggle to read are given very effective support and this usually leads to rapid improvements.
- Since the previous inspection, standards reached at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen. The proportion reaching the higher level in mathematics was double the national average in 2014 and represents outstanding progress. Pupils made good progress in reading and writing with the proportion reaching the higher Level 3 being higher than the national average.
- In 2014, the proportions of Year 6 pupils reaching the higher levels in reading and mathematics were significantly higher than the national average. The proportion reaching the higher levels in writing was above average.
- Across year groups and subjects, pupils are making good, and in some cases outstanding, progress. This is evident from the pupil tracking system, work seen in lessons and from evidence in pupils' books over time. With the help of the mathematics consultant, staff have quickly improved the quality of their teaching of mathematics and this has raised pupils' achievement across the school. Those making expected and better than expected progress is similar to national but those making better than expected progress in mathematics is higher than the national average, reflecting significant improvements in this area.
- Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because their additional needs are identified early and are fully met through one-to-one and small-group sessions delivered by highly skilled teaching assistants. Strong links with external agencies also support both academic and personal needs of individual pupils.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively and is directed towards supporting the very few disadvantaged pupils. This ensures that they make equally good as their classmates. The number of disadvantaged pupils in each year group is too small to compare meaningfully the standards they reach with others nationally.
- The most able pupils make good progress. There are strong links with a local high school and Year 6 pupils with particular talents benefit from the wide range of opportunities they provide. This raises pupils' aspirations and speeds up their learning.

The early years provision**is good**

- Children settle well into early years. Several have older siblings at Fir Ends so they have been used to meeting other pupils and staff at the start and end of the school day. Home visits are offered to those who do not have other family members in school. Prior to starting school, children and parents visit the early years setting. This gives staff an insight into what children enjoy doing so that activities can be planned to engage them in a range of activities.
- Communication between school and home is strong. Staff are available at the start and end of the school day so that everyone can share relevant information with each other. Parents are kept well informed of the progress their children are making through parents' evenings and detailed reports.
- Children take it in turns to take Keef, the class 'monkey', home for the weekend. Through photographs and simple sentences recorded in Keef's diary, learning beyond school is being encouraged.
- Learning Journeys are used by staff and parents to record each child's achievements throughout their time in early years both in school and at home. For example, one parent recorded that her child had 'taught her Grandma how to use the tablet computer this weekend.' Such records help staff to plan challenging activities to ensure children build on their experiences and make good progress.
- Good care is taken to keep children safe and ensure their good behaviour. When they are given free choice of activities in which to engage, they know that usually only three children at a time can be based in an area and so they learn to be patient and take turns.
- Children achieve well in the early years because of the good quality teaching from the dedicated staff team which is well led and managed. Children enjoy learning through topics, for example, 'Winter Wonderland' saw pupils bringing empty plastic milk cartons from home which they then used to build an igloo. This became a role play area where they could pretend to be Eskimos. This fully engaged pupils in gaining an insight into the lifestyles different to their own, while also encouraging re-cycling.
- Children's progress in reading, numeracy and personal and social development is particularly strong. Writing letters and words is not as strong because there are not yet enough opportunities for children to practise mark making. In 2014, the proportions reaching a good level of development were an improvement on 2013 and higher than the national average. All children are well prepared for learning in Key Stage 1 whether they are supported by additional funding, children with special educational needs or the most able children.

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

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| Unique reference number | 112420 |
| Local authority | Cumbria |
| Inspection number | 452021 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 107 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Sutherland Smith |
| Headteacher | Sue Hatt |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16 July 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01228 675283 |
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