

Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School

Newfields, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, TD15 1SP

Inspection dates 17–18 March 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' progress is variable in different subjects and year groups. Too few pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and, until very recently, this has also been true of children in the early years provision.
- Younger pupils do not make fast enough progress in reading. Pupils do not learn the links between letters and the sounds they make quickly enough at an early age.
- Teaching has not been good enough over time to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve as well as they could.
- In some lessons pupils are given work that is either too hard or too easy for them.
- Teachers do not insist that pupils make improvements to their work.
- New leaders have not had time to improve the school enough to make it good.
- Governors have not been rigorous enough in checking for themselves that pupils are achieving well or that teaching is good overall. In the past, they have relied too much on information from school leaders and external advisers.
- Targets for pupils' progress and attainment in the school's plans for the future have not been specific enough and timescales have not been precise.
- The Early Years requires improvement. Recent plans for improvement have not had time to have full effect.

The school has the following strengths

- Good teaching helps pupils to make good progress in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Improvements in the Early Years and in Key Stage 1 are helping pupils to make up some lost ground in their learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. As a result, pupils become confident, well-rounded citizens who are well prepared for the next step in their education.
- Compared to recent years, more of the most-able pupils are working at the higher levels for their age.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and the school ensures that pupils are safe.
- The new headteacher has a clear view of what good learning looks like and is determined to improve the school. His actions are already having a positive impact.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes. One observation was conducted jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also observed pupils' conduct at breaks and lunchtimes.
- The inspector listened to pupils in Years 2 and 4 read.
- Discussions were held with pupils in Year 4, parents, governors and a representative of the local authority. The inspector talked to a representative from the Diocese and the headteacher from the school's partner school. He also met with leaders within the school, including the leader of Early Years, the special educational needs coordinator and leader of literacy.
- The inspector took account of the 13 responses to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View. He also considered the school's own survey of parents' views and the nine questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector examined a wide range of documents including pupils' workbooks, information about pupils' progress, information about the monitoring of teaching and learning, the school's development plan and views of its own performance. He also examined records of governors' visits to the school, records of attendance and behaviour, and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

Peter Eves, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since September 2014 and the assistant headteacher has only recently taken on the responsibilities in an acting capacity. The acting leader of the Early Years has been in post since January 2015.
- This is a smaller than average-sized first school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The majority of pupils are White British and very few children speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils are taught in some mixed-age classes. There is a mixed Year 2 and Year 3 class and a mixed Year 3 and Year 4 class.
- Children attend the Nursery class on a part-time basis and the Reception class on a full-time basis.
- There has been significant staffing turbulence during this academic year at all levels. Currently, four out of five class teachers are newly qualified.
- The school has formed a partnership with a local school to provide mutual support and share expertise.
- The government's current floor standards do not apply since there are no Year 6 pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, to raise standards and pupils' progress further, especially in reading and in Key Stage 1, by:
 - reviewing the way that pupils learn how letters link to the sounds they make (phonics) so that younger pupils are helped to make rapid gains in their early reading skills
 - ensuring that work is at the correct level of challenge for all groups of pupils
 - making sure that pupils make the improvements to their work suggested by teachers when they mark their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management of the school, including the governing body, by:
 - supporting the development of leaders who are new to their roles
 - making sure that there is a sharp focus on pupils' rates of progress in all lessons
 - setting timescales in improvement plans with clear, measurable targets by which to assess accurately the gains made and ensure that the rate of school improvement continues

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The new headteacher is securing clear improvements in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. However, the changes to teaching are too recent to have improved pupils' achievement in national tests. In addition, leaders at other levels, all of whom are new to their roles, have not developed their skills fully in order to accelerate the rate of improvement.
- Middle leaders are not yet skilled enough at monitoring what is happening in their subjects and areas of responsibility. They create useful plans for improvement, but these do not have tight time scales and precise measures by which the success of actions can be evaluated.
- Leaders are not sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that all teachers plan work that is at the correct level of challenge for all pupils and that there is a sharp focus on pupils' progress in lessons.
- Procedures for managing the performance of teachers are thorough, setting clear targets for pupils' progress and teaching. There are appropriate links to teachers' standards and salary progression.
- The headteacher checks on pupils' progress regularly and takes prompt action to help pupils catch up if they are falling behind.
- The primary school sport fund has been used effectively to develop competitive sports, to use specialist coaches to develop expertise in teaching physical education, and to introduce new sports, such as tag rugby and kwik cricket. Pupils say that they enjoy their physical education lessons and appreciate all the after-school activities and clubs. These are contributing to pupils' healthy physical development and well-being.
- Leaders ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding and in making sure that all staff are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm. They make sure that all staff are alert for any signs of extremism or radicalisation.
- While the school has an appropriate focus on developing pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics, the curriculum also provides exciting opportunities for pupils to broaden their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They do this through, for example, the study of history, geography, religious education and through a range of visitors to the school and educational visits. These also ensure that pupils develop a clear understanding of traditional British values.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well in this very inclusive school where all are made to feel welcome. Good relations are encouraged and the school is free from discrimination.
- Leaders ensure that pupil premium funding is used well to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, gaps between their achievement and that of other pupils in the school and nationally are closing.
- The school now welcomes the support and advice it receives from the new local authority's school improvement service and particularly from its partner school, especially in helping leaders to manage changes to staffing. However, in the past, the local authority's assessments of teaching and pupils' achievement have not been rigorous or accurate enough. As a result of this, and of considerable upheaval, the school's overall effectiveness declined. Prompt action by the new headteacher has arrested this decline and set the school firmly on a path of improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive and committed to helping the school to improve and are increasingly effective in their roles. Although governors now offer more challenge about pupils' achievement, the governing body in the past has relied too much on the advice of school leaders and external advisors. Systems to check closely on plans for the future, the quality of teaching, the achievement of pupils and the curriculum have not been rigorous enough. Now, the effectiveness of governance is improving. Governors are determined to improve the school, have changed the committee structure to meet current needs and have organised appropriate training to improve their skills. They understand the arrangements to check on teachers' performance and any rewards for good teaching. Governors receive clear information about how the pupil premium funding and the primary school sport funding are spent and the impact that these funds are having.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say that behaviour is typically very good around the school, in the playground, in the dining hall and in lessons. Pupils typically work hard and try to do their best.
- Occasionally, a very small number of pupils are silly, especially when the teaching is not at its best. When

this happens, there are clear procedures to ensure that this behaviour stops promptly. Clear rules and a system of rewards and sanctions make sure that pupils know how to behave well.

- Pupils show great respect for each other and are extremely polite to adults and visitors. They are eager to talk about all the good things in their school. They are proud to be members of their school community and say that it is a friendly place where newcomers are welcomed and everyone is happy.
- Pupils show great maturity for their age and take on responsibilities willingly. The members of the Dinner Crew help to ensure the smooth running of the dining hall and play leaders ensure that there are games to play at lunchtimes. There is an active school council with a budget and its members are currently considering what equipment to buy to enhance playtimes.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and show a willingness to concentrate, work hard and persevere when work is challenging. They collaborate well when asked to work together in pairs or small groups and are beginning to develop independence in their work.
- Attendance has improved and is broadly average. The school has worked hard to make sure that everyone understands the importance of regular attendance and its links with progress. Pupils also say that they enjoy coming to school. When asked what he would improve about the school, one Year 4 pupil said he would like 'longer terms and shorter holidays, please.'

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and parents agree that their children feel safe in school. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet and when near busy roads or by rivers and the sea.
- Pupils say that there is almost no bullying. They know what bullying in its different forms looks like and believe that, if any occurred, it would be dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- There are effective systems in place to check and monitor visitors and there are well-thought-out procedures for the start and end of the school day.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable. This is partly because, due to staffing issues, some staff are new to the school and some have very recently started to teach.
- There has been a determined effort to improve teaching in the current year. There is now good teaching in most lessons and the impact of this is seen in the improving progress that pupils are making in English and mathematics. However, teaching is not consistently good over time. Teachers do not always use the information they have about pupils' achievement to plan work at the right level that will allow pupils to make good progress in lessons.
- Teachers mark pupils' work very thoroughly. They tell pupils where they have been successful and suggest what they can do to improve. However, they do not insist that pupils make these improvements promptly, so pupils do not always learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers plan work that is interesting and which engages pupils. In a mixed Year 2 and Year 3 class, pupils excitedly tackled the challenge of organising the timetable for a visit to Edinburgh, using their understanding of telling the time.
- Teachers know their pupils well as individuals and want the best for them. Good relationships are typical between pupils and the adults who work with them. As one pupil said, 'Teachers are really great. They make everything fun.'
- Teaching assistants are dedicated to helping pupils to learn. They are becoming increasingly skilled in using a range of strategies designed to support specific pupils individually or in small groups. They work well with teachers to make good use of information about pupils' progress to provide well-matched support.
- The teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) has not helped pupils to make a rapid start in learning to read at an early age. This is under review because leaders fully appreciate the importance of learning to read. Pupils now read regularly in school and are encouraged to read at home. The school is working well with parents to help them understand how to support their child's reading development.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective and teachers plan lessons that build on sound foundations. Pupils say that they enjoy mathematics and using their skills to solve real-life problems.
- The teaching of writing is effective. Pupils are given opportunities to write about a range of subjects, both in their literacy lessons and in other subjects. Displays in classrooms celebrate examples of good writing. Pupils develop good handwriting styles and write at increasing length and with greater accuracy as they

move through the school.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start in the Nursery with skills and abilities that are typical for children of their age. In the past they made slow progress and the proportion who reached a good level of development and were ready for learning in Year 1 was low. This slow progress continued in Key Stage 1 and pupils reached standards that were below average at the end of Year 2. Progress accelerated in Years 3 and 4 and pupils reached standards that were a little above average. As a result, the achievement of pupils requires improvement. However, pupils are now making faster progress and standards are rising across the school but have not been shown in national test results.
- Evidence gathered during the inspection indicates that pupils in all key stages and year groups are now making better progress, especially in writing and mathematics. The work in current pupils' books, together with records of their progress, indicates that pupils in Years 2 and 4 are working at higher levels than in the past.
- In Year 1, pupils apply their phonics knowledge to their reading, although not enough pupils in the past were confident in using this knowledge. This was reflected in the below average proportion of pupils who met the required standard in the 2014 national phonics check and the impact of this was seen in pupils' slower progress in reading and subsequent lower standards. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are now reading at the level expected for their age as a result of measures being put into place.
- Standards in writing and mathematics are rising and are higher than they are in reading. Pupils develop good basic skills in mathematics and build on these as they move through the school. They benefit from regular opportunities to use their writing and mathematical skills regularly in different subjects.
- Leaders use data well to track pupils' achievement and they use effective systems to check on pupils' progress throughout the school. As a result, leaders and teachers can now identify accurately any gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. Individual pupils' learning is now being boosted by timely support.
- The most-able pupils are now challenged well in most classes and an increasing number are securely on track to achieve the higher standards which they are capable of reaching. However, they do not make consistently good progress cross the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs now make progress similar to, and sometimes better than, others in the school, often from lower starting points. They are identified accurately by a very experienced special educational needs coordinator who is able to direct appropriate support from increasingly skilled staff. These staff are a dedicated team who are committed to providing high quality support both in and out of class.
- Pupil premium funding is now used well to support eligible pupils, and they now make similar progress to, and sometimes better than, others in the school. Gaps in achievement between these pupils and others in the school and nationally are closing.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The Early Years provision is led by a new and effective acting leader. In a short space of time she has created a close-knit team who are united in their commitment to ensuring that the children are not only happy and safe, but also do as well as they can. She has clear plans for the future development of the provision, based on an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development, particularly in relation to the outdoors environment. There has not been enough time for these to have had a full impact, which is why the early years provision requires improvement.
- Children of all abilities now make good progress. They join the Nursery class with the skills and abilities that are typical for children of their age. In the past, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development was lower than it should have been. However, this is improving with more children in the current year working at the expected levels, and above, for their age. As a result, the majority are reaching targets which mean they will be ready for Year 1.
- Learning is well planned and flexible to meet the needs and interests of the children. During the inspection the children excitedly made cookies for the troll they were learning about and proudly presented samples for the headteacher and inspector.
- Teaching is now good and has improved. Adults know each child very well and they regularly assess each child's progress so that they can plan activities to ensure that they make good progress. Good use is made of the learning areas to create stimulating activities that appeal to children's imagination and curiosity.

Children are encouraged to explore and develop their communication and social skills. In the Reception class one of the children accurately described to the inspector how she had planted a magic bean that would grow into a beanstalk.

- Behaviour is good and pupils play and learn together well. Adults model and insist on high standards of conduct. Children respond to and follow the well-established routines that ensure that the early years is a calm yet stimulating learning environment. Safety is of high importance to all and staff are vigilant. They make sure that children are safe at all times and especially at the start and end of the school day when there are appropriate systems to ensure safety.

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	122271
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	453353

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joyce Guthrie
Headteacher	Gary Hilton
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2010
Telephone number	01289 306170
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