

# West Newcastle Academy

Benwell Nature Park, Benwell, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE4 8XT

**Inspection dates** 12–13 May 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b> <b>2</b>
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.

- The distinctive vision, drive and enthusiasm of the headteacher and governors have helped this new school make an effective start.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and those that need to catch up are doing so quickly because of good teaching.
- The headteacher has taken effective action to raise pupil's achievement and tackle specific weaknesses in teaching.
- Behaviour in and around the school is good and incidents of bullying are very rare. Pupils and parents are confident that staff will address any problems that arise.
- Provision in the early years is good. The curriculum offers good and sometimes outstanding opportunities for children to learn in a variety of exciting and challenging locations.
- The exciting, rich and varied experiences offered to pupils, including in the nature park and regular visits to the beach, inspire children and promote positive attitudes to learning.
- All staff know the pupils well and provide high-quality care and support, which helps pupils feel safe and thrive.
- Parents have a good relationship with the staff and are strong advocates for the quality of the school.
- Governors know the school well and keep a close check on the work being done to improve standards. They ask challenging questions and take a strong lead in defining the culture and ethos of the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attendance is improving rapidly but is still too low.
- The information provided to governors by school leaders, although comprehensive, sometimes lacks precision and clarity.
- Attainment in writing is not as good as that seen in reading and mathematics.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes, including two paired observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons, undertook learning walks around the school and listened to some children read.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, teachers, members of the governing body, a group of pupils and a number of parents. In addition, a discussion took place with a representative of the Department for Education who provides advice and guidance to the school.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documentation including the school improvement plan and self-evaluation, information on pupils' progress, minutes of governors' meetings and information on safeguarding (about how the school protects children and keeps them safe). A range of policies were also reviewed.
- The inspector took account of 37 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire) and 18 responses to a staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Jonathan Brown, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is a Free School that opened in September 2013.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There are currently two classes in the school, covering pupils aged 4 to 6 years old. Provision in the early years is full time.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is higher than that seen nationally.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is much higher than the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided 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 above the national average. There are currently no disabled children at the school.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school provision.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement further, particularly in writing, by ensuring that handwriting is neat and legible and pupils are given more opportunities to extend their writing.
- Ensure all teaching matches the best in the school through greater clarity about the intended learning outcomes in lessons.
- Further improve rates of attendance to at least match those seen nationally by building on the approaches already undertaken and learning from best practice elsewhere.
- Improve the information provided by the headteacher to governors so that they are more knowledgeable about what needs to improve and why.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governors are determined to provide for the needs of every pupil. Their actions, including tackling weaknesses in teaching, are making a positive difference to the lives and achievements of pupils.
- The headteacher has an accurate overview of the quality of teaching in the school. She uses this information to set targets for teachers, and to challenge all teachers to improve their practice and foster a culture of collaboration. This collaboration includes a wide range of classroom and non-classroom-based support staff facilitating the sharing of best practice between all adults in school.
- All staff promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination where it occurs. They ensure all pupils are able to participate in all the school has to offer. For example, homework support is provided through an after-school provision for those that need it.
- The pupils receive a rich, balanced, broad and interesting curriculum. This is a strength of the school and key to its distinctiveness. The use of outdoor provision, almost weekly trips to various locations including beaches and woodlands and a belief in utilising first-hand experiences to underpin learning, characterise the school. Literacy and numeracy skills are woven into these experiences and also taught systematically as distinct lessons. Additional sports funding is used effectively, including a weekly visit to a local sports centre and access to specialist coaching. Pupils enjoy these sessions and many see them as a highlight of the week. After school provision provides good support for pupils to complete their homework.
- The school has effective systems in place to check on how well pupils are progressing in all aspects of learning including reading, writing and mathematics. The school is aware that some previous assessments on how well pupils are doing when they start in school have been contradictory, but school leaders have taken steps to address this and the accuracy of data is now more secure.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is highly effective and enhanced by additional trips and visitors to the school. This helps promote respect, tolerance and understanding of other faiths and cultures in Britain and beyond. Understanding the importance of the rule of law and democratic processes are carefully planned and embedded within these experiences.
- Parents are working closely in partnership with the school to support their children's learning. As a result, parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. During the inspection, conversations and correspondence from parents demonstrated they believe the school is making a big difference to their children's lives. One stated that 'The school is a magical place and he comes home buzzing every day'; another said, 'He gets up in the morning and runs to school, he can't wait to get there.'
- Leaders have spent the pupil premium funding effectively. This includes additional adult support to provide extra help. This has resulted in improvements in the achievements of disadvantaged pupils. Nearly all of those that need to catch up are doing so quickly. The attendance of some of these pupils has been supported and is improving but is still too low.
- The systems to keep pupils safe in the school are good. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Staff work with pupils to help them recognise, understand and manage risk as an important part of their everyday activities in a variety of settings and contexts.
- The school has forged strong links with other good and outstanding schools to ensure that they learn from and share best practice. School improvement advice provided by a Department for Education advisor is both accurate and timely. As a result, the school has an accurate view of its own strengths and weaknesses.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

Governors are passionate about the school. They are proud of the distinctive approaches the school adopts and have a good understanding of them. They are ambitious about the impact they want the school to have in the wider community and on the outcomes for all children, especially those at risk of underachieving. For example, the admissions policy prioritises those pupils in receipt of the pupil premium funding and those at risk of underachieving. They challenge and hold the staff and headteacher to account through effective performance management procedures. Governors have a regular presence in the school and carry out visits with a clear focus on the outcomes for pupils. This means they know the school well. Governors use their expertise well to check on how well additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and sport activities is used. They have a good overview of how well pupils and groups of pupils are progressing but the information provided to them by the headteacher sometimes lacks precision and clarity.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and show care and respect for adults and other pupils. Pupils, although very young, are developing a strong sense of fairness and understanding of right from wrong.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and develop sustained concentration and resilience through regular opportunities to access well-structured and absorbing challenges set by teachers. Some pupils can occasionally become distracted when they should be listening or working. Teachers manage these instances well to refocus pupils on the task in hand.
- Records show that there are very few instances of poor behaviour or bullying; when an incident has happened, the school has reviewed it in detail to ensure there are no reoccurrences.
- Where pupils' behaviours can be challenging, they are well supported and staff manage this well with additional help from a key adult and close working relationships with parents.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils report that bullying rarely, if ever, happens and if they feel unsafe they know what to do. They are aware of the need to tell adults about anything said that is hurtful or focuses on differences between themselves and others. The school has a zero tolerance of homophobic and racist bullying and deals effectively with issues through circle times and discussions with parents.
- The school's programme to support pupils in recognising and managing risk is highly effective. Regular conversations take place about how pupils can keep themselves safe in a variety of settings. The challenges of the school site, access and daily use of the nature park in which the school sits and the weekly trips for children are underpinned by effective risk assessments. These are kept under regular review and, where necessary, external advice is accessed and acted on. For example, the school is currently reviewing staffing and access arrangements to an area of the nature park that includes a pond. Parents and pupils are confident that pupils are safe.
- The headteacher and governors have taken a range of actions to improve attendance and remove barriers to learning. These include commissioning an education welfare officer to review procedures and putting individual plans in place for families where persistent absence is an issue. Daily phone calls to chase up absences are also carried out. As a result, attendance has improved rapidly but is still too low.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Work seen in lessons, in children's books, learning journals and assessment data across both Reception and Year 1 classes show that pupils are making good progress as a result of the good teaching they receive in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) is helping pupils make good progress across early years and Year 1. This is because it is taught regularly and systematically with opportunities to apply what has been learnt in a variety of contexts. There are abundant opportunities to use a variety of books and children read regularly and often.
- All pupils receive individualised learning plans. Pupils who are at risk of underachieving or have special educational needs are given good support which is based upon these plans. The headteacher and staff regularly discuss and review this information to ensure interventions can happen in a timely manner. Consequently, these pupils make good progress and many are rapidly catching up with their classmates.
- Teachers mark pupils' books in line with the school marking policy. Verbal feedback is a key feature of the teaching seen. Pupils are given regular and ongoing advice and guidance about how to improve their learning. Teachers do not always check that this has been followed up by pupils. As a consequence, pupils' learning is not always secured before they move on to their next piece of work.
- In early years, teachers and adults are clear about the intended learning outcomes they expect to see from lessons and planned activities. This helps them to focus on specific vocabulary, skills and concepts in their questioning and interactions with children. This clarity of purpose is sometimes not as precise in Year 1 lessons. As a consequence, some pupils, on occasions, are not always clear about what they can do to improve their learning more rapidly.

**The achievement of pupils is good**

- Children come into the school with skills and attitudes below those typically seen for their age. They make good progress in the Reception class across all aspects of learning so that by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, most are reaching the level expected of them.
- Evidence seen in lessons, pupils' work and school assessment data show that progress across Year 1 is good in all aspects of the curriculum.
- Although a minority of pupils enter Year 1 a little below where expected, they continue to catch up quickly and after two terms the proportions achieving expected levels in reading (including phonics) and mathematics match those typical for their age. This good progress is less pronounced in writing. Opportunities to write at length are too infrequent and the quality of presentation and handwriting is below that usually found for their age.
- Disadvantaged pupils including those for whom the school receive additional funding make good progress across both early years and Year 1. These pupils are catching up quickly on what is expected of them and the gap between them and the other pupils in the school is narrowing.
- There are currently no disabled pupils in the school. Those identified with special educational needs are given good support and guidance. As a result, they make good progress and complete the same or similar work to that of their classmates.
- The most able pupils make good progress but it is not quite as rapid as that seen elsewhere in the school. Some are now developing skills and understanding beyond those expected for their age. Opportunities to further develop and challenge their vocabulary and thinking skills are sometimes missed.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups are making good progress and keeping up with the progress of their classmates.
- Those for whom English is an additional language are making good and sometimes outstanding progress because of personalised learning plans and the additional adult support. This helps them to take part in all the activities the school curriculum offers. Those that are new to English also progress quickly. They quickly learn the routines and language that allow them to fully take part in lessons and the life of the school.

**The early years provision is good**

- Good leadership of the early years, including the effective identification and tracking of individual children's needs and some outstanding curriculum provision are resulting in children who have positive attitudes to their learning. Safety of children is managed effectively while children are also encouraged to identify and manage their own safety within challenging learning environments.
- The curriculum is exciting and fully engages pupils in a range of first-hand experiences in a variety of settings. Adults skilfully support children in developing basic skills in English and mathematics. Individualised learning plans meet the needs of children well.
- Most children start school with skills that are below those typical for their age. Many start in Reception with limited or no previous experience of nursery or other educational provision. They make good progress across the Reception class so that the majority reach the expected level of development that ensures they are prepared for life in Year 1. The proportion doing so is below that seen nationally but is improving. Those that need to catch up are doing so.
- Children play well together, cooperate and are happy. Adults have established a stimulating environment in which children work calmly and purposefully. There is a focus on developing personal, social and emotional skills so children become confident learners.
- Children learn about letters and the sounds that they make in small groups on a regular basis. Adults teach this aspect of reading systematically and with enthusiasm. This means that children are confident in trying to tackle new words they come across and are making good progress in applying the skills they have learnt.
- Mathematical skills are taught in short, discreet lessons and are practised and applied in many of the other activities children complete. For example, in constructing a pirate treasure map, counting and number recognition skills were taught alongside simple coordinates.
- The headteacher has secure systems in place to check on the progress children make and an increasingly accurate view of the children's starting points when they first come into the school. Where children have come from other settings, the school works with the information it has been provided. Parents also contribute their knowledge and understanding of what their children can and cannot do. As a result

children settle quickly and parents engage well with their child's development.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139729
<b>Local authority</b>	Newcastle Upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	450145

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	46
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Shelagh Keogh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Percy
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 273 9477
<b>Fax number</b>	Not applicable
<b>Email address</b>	info@westnewcastleacademy.org

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