

Ellingham Church of England Aided First School

Ellingham, Chathill, Northumberland, NE67 5ET

Inspection dates	17–18 November 2015
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders are not ambitious enough for the achievement of all pupils. They have not ensured that teaching is securing good or better progress from all pupils.
- Most pupils make expected progress across the school, including the most able. However, not enough pupils make good or better progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, to catch up quickly or to reach the highest levels.
- Provision in the early years requires improvement. Activities do not provide enough challenge to enable all children to do as well as they are able.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account effectively enough for improvements in pupils' academic achievement.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. Work set is not challenging pupils to make rapid progress in all subjects.
- Teachers do not regularly set tasks which allow pupils to apply their mathematical skills through problem solving and investigation.
- Pupils do not have frequent opportunities to develop their skills in writing at length.
- Targets set for pupils, including through teachers' written feedback, are not consistently precise enough to help pupils to improve their work.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not ask the right questions to encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum provides excellent opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are well prepared to become responsible citizens.
- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in Year 1 has increased.
- Pupils enjoy school. They are proud of their school family and show kindness and courtesy to all members of the community.
- Leaders have used additional funding effectively to enhance the curriculum for physical education and sport. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils, including the most able, make at least good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
 - using assessment information to set appropriately challenging work for pupils, including children in the early years
 - providing more regular opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical knowledge through investigations and problem solving
 - giving pupils more frequent opportunities to develop their writing skills
 - ensuring that targets and next steps for pupils focus on the most important priorities to help them to improve their work
 - making sure that adults, including those in the early years, ask questions which require pupils to think deeply about their learning.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that:
 - precise and ambitious targets are set, identifying the proportions of pupils who will make good or outstanding progress
 - leaders, including middle leaders, undertake regular checks on the quality of teaching which focus on the impact of teaching over time on pupils' progress
 - governors have the expertise they need to evaluate the progress made by all pupils and to hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders recognise that they have not been sufficiently ambitious for the achievement of all pupils. As a result, teachers do not have high enough expectations of the rates of progress that pupils should make. While all pupils make typical progress, not enough pupils make good or outstanding progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, to achieve as well as they can.
- Leaders have recently improved the quality of the checks they make on teaching. However, these are not yet frequent enough and too much weight is given to individual lessons, without taking account of the impact of teaching on pupils' progress over time. Middle leaders do not have sufficient opportunities to check on the quality of teaching in their subject areas.
- While leaders have correctly identified some school priorities, such as improving pupils' progress in writing, their evaluation of the achievement of pupils in other subjects, for example mathematics, has been overly positive. As a result, plans for improvement lack the sharp focus needed to secure consistently good teaching and good outcomes for all pupils.
- Leaders have improved pupils' achievement in some areas of the curriculum. The introduction of a new programme for phonics has improved the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils. The proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected level at the end of Year 1 has increased and is above average.
- Leaders are determined to provide a broad and balanced education for all pupils. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their artistic skills. Additional funding for physical education and sport has been used effectively to provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils, including after-school and lunchtime clubs and access to specialist gymnastic facilities. This has a positive impact on pupils' emotional and physical well-being.
- The school's Christian ethos makes a significant contribution to the respect and tolerance that pupils and adults show to one another. 'Team Time', where pupils work together on a weekly basis in their mixed-age house groups, fosters a strong sense of community. Pupils explore the personal, social and emotional issues which affect them and are eager to engage in debate and discussion.
- Leaders go the extra mile to overcome barriers to learning for pupils with additional needs. They have established good links with external agencies to provide support for pupils. As a result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well.
- Leaders have provided effective professional development for staff in some important areas of the curriculum. A partnership with the local authority specialist team has enabled teachers and teaching assistants to develop a range of strategies to support children's communication and language skills in the early years. Consequently, children's progress in this area has accelerated.
- Leaders and all staff have received training and guidance on safeguarding and understand their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe. Parents appreciate this. As one stated in the inspection questionnaire, 'the staff at this school consider the children's safety and welfare as paramount and work very hard to aid their development; there is a very good relationship between the school and the parents and any concerns are listened to and dealt with'.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors visit the school regularly. They understand their statutory duties for safeguarding and use their professional experience to check that pupils and staff are safe. This has resulted in improvements to the security of the school site.
 - Governors are knowledgeable about the curriculum and the many activities which pupils enjoy in school. However, they do not have the necessary skills to evaluate the achievement of pupils accurately. As a result, they have not ensured that the school development plan includes sufficiently ambitious and measurable targets for pupils' progress. This limits their ability to hold leaders to account for improving the school's performance.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Over time, leaders have not ensured that teaching is consistently securing good or better achievement for all pupils. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are not high enough. Work planned for pupils does not consistently challenge them to make rapid progress.
- Leaders recognised that an over-structured approach to the teaching of writing limited pupils' ability, particularly the most able, to write freely and for different purposes. While teachers have begun to address this, pupils still do not have sufficiently frequent opportunities to practise their writing skills. As a consequence, too few pupils are making better than expected progress in writing.
- In mathematics, pupils spend too much time focusing on basic skills and repeating calculations which they have already mastered. Teachers do not plan regular opportunities for pupils to grapple with tricky problems or investigations. As a result, pupils are not developing their mathematical reasoning well enough.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not use questions consistently well to develop pupils' knowledge and skills. Too few questions require pupils to think deeply or to take time to consider and develop a high-quality response.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly in line with the school policy and their assessments are accurate. However, pupils do not always act on teachers' feedback and, at times, the 'next steps' identified by teachers do not focus on the most important priorities to help pupils to improve their work. Consequently, marking is not having a consistently positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Teachers meet with pupils on a half-termly basis to set academic and personal development targets. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to have a say in their targets and these are shared with parents. However, the targets are not always precise enough to enable pupils to make good or better progress.
- Teachers know their pupils well and take account of pupils' interests to plan learning topics. Topics are enhanced with a range of visits and visitors. For example, pupils enjoyed a visit to Warkworth Castle to launch their 'Countryside, Coast and Castles' topic. As a result of this, pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and are motivated to work hard.
- Teachers focus intensively on the development of pupils' basic skills. The school's handwriting programme has enabled pupils to write neatly and present their work well. Teachers regularly review and refresh their approach to teaching spelling and this has had a positive impact on pupils' understanding of the importance of good spelling.
- Positive relationships between pupils and adults make a strong contribution to the purposeful atmosphere in classrooms. Teachers reinforce their expectations of pupils' conduct and this ensures that pupils behave well.
- Pupils are given homework regularly. This covers a range of subject areas and consolidates pupils' classroom learning. Pupils enjoy the varied nature of the work, particularly the online learning opportunities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's motto, 'A small school with a big heart', is evident in the nurturing, family atmosphere which pervades the school. As one parent indicated, children 'have formed firm friendships and feel safe and content at school'.
- High-quality collective worship makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, social and moral development. During the inspection, pupils enjoyed an 'anti-bullying week' assembly which helped them to reflect effectively on the impact of their words and actions on others. Pupils are clear that bullying is not tolerated in their school.
- Pupils have a strong sense of their responsibilities as global citizens. Older pupils organise a Fair Trade tuck shop on a weekly basis, order and monitor stock levels and raise funds for a partner school in Uganda. This also contributes to the development of their leadership skills.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum supports pupils to stay safe. Police and fire safety officers attend school to help pupils to consider the risks of 'stranger danger' and fire. Pupils have a good understanding

of the strategies they can employ to keep themselves safe online.

- Pupils are very confident and are keen to learn. They work hard and collaborate well when they work in teams. Occasionally, older pupils do not take enough responsibility for improving their work by acting on written feedback from their teachers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders have established clear systems to encourage good behaviour which are consistently applied across all classrooms. Pupils understand these and appreciate the rewards on offer. Consequently, pupils behave well and disruption to pupils' learning is rare.
- Pupils are polite and welcome visitors to their school. The play areas and corridors in the school are orderly and older pupils show care and consideration of younger children at social times.
- Pupils cooperate well with adults and show respect and tolerance to others. They recognise the importance of being kind to each other. This results in a harmonious community where everyone gets along well.
- The majority of pupils attend well and whole-school attendance is broadly in line with the national average. However, a higher than average proportion of pupils are persistently absent from school. Leaders have taken action to address this and the number of pupils missing school on a regular basis has reduced this academic year. Leaders recognise that they need to continue to work on this to ensure that all pupils attend regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Children make typical progress across Nursery and Reception classes from their different starting points. The proportion of children reaching the expected level by the end of Reception has improved and is in line with the national average. As a result, children are ready for the curriculum in Year 1. However, not enough children make better than typical progress to exceed the expected levels by the end of the Reception year.
- Most pupils make the expected progress in all subjects; however, there is inconsistency across the school in the proportions of pupils making better than expected progress. Too few pupils, including the most-able pupils, are making good or better progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, to reach the levels of which they are capable.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level in phonics by the end of Year 1 has increased over time and is now above the national average. Boys and girls achieve equally well and most pupils have the skills they need to read with fluency and confidence.
- Small cohorts of pupils with varying starting points, as well as a number of pupils joining the school at times other than the usual admission point, account for fluctuations in pupils' attainment across the school and over time. Most pupils reach standards which ensure that they are prepared for the next stage of their education at middle school.
- The small number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make typical or better progress from their starting points. Leaders work closely with families to ensure that those pupils with the most complex needs receive an individualised curriculum to enable them to achieve well.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Almost all children make typical progress across the early years. However, not enough make better than typical progress to achieve as well as they can, particularly in the key areas of writing and mathematics. As a result, too few are exceeding the expected level at the end of the Reception year.
- Teachers plan activities carefully to take account of the interests of children. However, they do not always plan sufficiently challenging activities to enable pupils to make the more rapid progress of which they are capable. In mathematics, children do not have sufficient opportunities to explore and investigate through activities of their own choosing. Adults do not use questions consistently well enough to deepen children's thinking and understanding.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of the pace at which children can make progress in

writing. Adults do not provide frequent enough opportunities for children to practise their skills and write for different purposes. Opportunities for children to choose to write or mark-make independently, both indoors and outdoors, are not developed well enough.

- Relationships between adults and children are excellent and make a strong contribution to children's enjoyment of their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants set high expectations for behaviour and have established clear routines which children understand. As a result, children's personal and social skills are developed well across the early years.
- Leaders recognised the need to provide more opportunities for children to develop their communication and language skills. The introduction of the 'woodland workshop', an outdoor classroom, to which children make a weekly visit, has enabled adults to encourage better-quality talk and discussion. As a result, children, particularly boys, have begun to make more rapid progress in this area of the curriculum.
- Relationships between home and school are very effective. Parents receive a weekly learning journal which includes photographs and descriptions of the work that children have completed. Adults use information provided by parents to assess what children can do. This good communication enables school staff to get to know pupils well.
- Leaders have used the 'woodland workshop' to encourage children to take responsibility for safety. Children create their own rules to keep themselves safe, for example when hot chocolate is being made on the outdoor stove. As a result, children understand the need to think carefully about situations where their safety might be at risk.

School details

Unique reference number	122289
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10001480

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eileen Duncan
Headteacher	Diane Lakey
Telephone number	01665 589233
Website	http://www.ellingham.northumberland.sch.uk
Email address	admin@ellingham.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 September 2010

Information about this school

- This is a first school, catering for pupils aged three to nine. It is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is well below the national average. The pupil premium is government funding provided for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is just above the national average.
- Pupils attend the Nursery year on a part-time basis and the Reception year on a full-time basis.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed the quality of teaching and learning across all classes, including observing teaching jointly with the headteacher. The inspector looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and talked to them about their learning and their experiences at school.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and some governors and a group of pupils. The inspector also talked with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspector evaluated a wide range of school documents, including the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation, information on pupils' progress, records of the checks made on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings, information on safeguarding and a range of policies.
- The inspector considered the views expressed in questionnaire returns from staff and the 44 responses made by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Claire Brown, Lead Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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