

Otterburn First School

Main Road, Otterburn, Newcastle upon Tyne NE19 1JF

Inspection dates	15–16 March 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This school is effectively managed by the acting headteacher and governors, who have quality of provision and an 'only the best will do for the pupils' attitude at the heart of all they do.
- The governors have, through their professional approach, brought about rapid improvement in teaching and pupils' outcomes and steered the school well through a period of turbulence.
- Effective teaching across the school ensures that all pupils achieve well. Pupils behave well within lessons and around the school. They look out for each other, and are polite and helpful.
- All pupils make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, with some doing better than this. Pupils enjoy reading and do so widely.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare is a focus of the school. A wide variety of extra activities outside the school day promote and effectively support this work.
- Early years is well led and managed. Children progress well from their different starting points due to skilled teaching and a well-planned environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are not consistent opportunities for all pupils to develop their independent learning skills.
- The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school is not high enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to secure substantial and sustained progress for all pupils, by:
 - increasing the number of opportunities to embed pupils' ability to be independent in their learning
 - consistently enabling the pupils to extend their mastery of subjects through the application of their skills and knowledge to problem solving.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The drive, determination and passion of the acting headteacher to provide a high-quality experience for the pupils in her care have led to rapid progress in a short space of time. She has taken some difficult decisions and actions that have led to a sharp improvement in teaching and outcomes for pupils across the school. Together with the governing body, she has identified key priorities to ensure that the school continues to move forward apace. This means that there is now a culture of high aspiration for both pupils and staff.
- Subject leadership has been effectively led by the acting headteacher during a period of staff turbulence. Each area of the curriculum has a clear action plan. This is monitored by the acting headteacher and by the governors responsible for that area of the curriculum, to ensure that improvements are driven forward.
- The acting headteacher regularly observes teachers in the classrooms and makes accurate judgements regarding how they can improve their practice. She has requested additional support with this from other headteachers to ensure that her judgements are robust. Any recommendations she makes are followed up and staff are supported to attend training or access other support to address any issues.
- Performance management also extends to the teaching assistants, who are equally well supported to improve their practice, demonstrating the high value which is placed on them in improving the school.
- The acting headteacher frequently checks how well pupils are progressing. These assessments are used well to move pupils' learning on or identify and plan for any additional support they may need.
- The curriculum is well organised and provides activities which pupils enjoy. The wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural, and physical development. The primary school physical education and sport funding is used effectively to widen participation in sports and competitions and includes training for teachers, to ensure longer-term sustainability.
- The local authority and its partners have effectively supported the acting headteacher and governors in securing improvements in teaching, learning and governance.
- The school gathers the views of parents regularly. Through workshops, parents evenings, a consistent homework routine and newsletters, parents feel well informed and knowledgeable about their children's education and progress. They also have a good understanding of the process the school has been going through to secure improvements.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Governors have undertaken an independent review of their skills, roles and function. They have adopted the recommendations and have brought in additional members with specialist skills and knowledge. Their structure of committees and individual responsibilities means they now know the school well and are much strengthened. They are clearly and effectively focused on improving the quality of the education the pupils have in their school.
 - Governors know the school improvement plan, and use the priorities from this as a focus for their regular visits to school. They rigorously challenge the school during these visits, and through the committee structure. This means they are very aware of the progress the school is making and where further improvements are needed.
 - Governors have effectively supported the acting headteacher in making difficult decisions to ensure that the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils improves. They have taken steps to stabilise the teaching staff and are in the process of appointing a permanent executive headteacher.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors, managers and staff keep up to date on current legislation, and ensure that policies and procedures reflect this. Staff are all up to date in training and the governing body ensure that safer recruitment practices are followed. Pupils causing concern are the opening item on staff meeting agendas, meaning that the school is able to act swiftly or keep a watching eye out for any pupils who may be facing problems.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The improvements to teaching made since the last inspection mean that teaching is now good throughout the school and as a result, pupils make good progress.

- The high-quality assessments completed at meetings to consider pupils' progress each half-term means staff know exactly where a pupil is in terms of attainment and progress. As a result, timely actions and individual plans are quickly put in place to address any issues.
- Teaching staff ensure that any pupils who have special educational needs or disability are able to access the curriculum alongside their peers. The effective individual support they receive means that they are able to progress at the same rate as their peers, and in some areas of learning are progressing even more quickly.
- Pupils are stimulated by the interesting curriculum meaning they are engaged in learning. For instance, in science, pupils set up experiments to measure the rate of evaporation of water. They could record their findings and describe in some detail what makes a fair test.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use praise well to highlight achievement. They follow the school's marking policy and ensure that pupils have time to respond to their comments, or to complete any corrections. Pupils' individual targets mean that they know exactly what they must achieve. The new assessment system effectively identifies for teachers exactly what skills must be taught. This has led to a marked improvement in progress and attainment.
- Homework is regularly set from the Reception Year onwards, meaning that pupils develop positive attitudes to learning from an early age. Parents comment on how useful they find this too in knowing what their children are learning at school and how well they are progressing.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is well taught, and pupils know the skills to use when reading. This is effectively linked to the development of their writing skills, with even the youngest pupils able to use their knowledge to correctly spell unknown words.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved since the last inspection, with a detailed action plan in place to continue this progress. Pupils' mastery of mathematical skills is demonstrated in their workbooks, and there are opportunities given for them to apply these skills in problem solving. The most-able pupils are given opportunities to use their skills independently. However, this is not consistently applied across all areas of the curriculum and all ability groups.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils care for each other, and take on their responsibilities seriously. At lunchtimes, older children look after the youngest, clearing their plates and recording what they have eaten. Additionally, they take on roles, such as librarians, with enthusiasm. Parents relate how older children look after younger ones on the bus journey to and from school, making sure they have their seatbelts securely fastened and they are happy and safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of democracy through the elections to the school council. They describe this process as fair because they have a vote and there is one girl and one boy from each year group. The school council takes an active role in school decision making and development, for example by suggesting improvements in the playground environment, and working with the Parent Teacher Association to deliver these, and by deciding which charities should be supported.
- Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and parents echo this. Pupils are confident and very aware of others' needs, and that these may differ from person to person. They understand about different forms of bullying, and appreciate the difference between bullying and 'falling out'. They are taught how to stay safe when using the internet, for example through e-safety sessions.
- Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They take part in a wide range of sport through the extra-curricular activities on offer, such as gymnastics and cross-country running. Pupils have just won through to the semi-finals of their local inter-school tag rugby competition, along with gaining the silver award for sport involvement. Younger pupils know that by undertaking exercise their hearts beat faster, which makes their bodies healthier.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The high standards of behaviour expected are reflected both inside the classrooms and outside, such as at lunchtime. When returning to a classroom from small-group sessions, pupils enter in such a way as not to disturb the learning of others.

- Pupils consistently display positive attitudes to learning, which means that they listen well and settle quickly to their tasks. Low-level disruption in lessons is very rare. When it does happen, staff are very swift to act and are skilful in diffusing any situations.
- Attendance can vary widely due to the very small numbers of pupils. However, pupils attend very regularly and attendance is currently above average. If a pupil is absent without notice, then the school endeavours to make contact with the parent within the first half hour of registration to ensure the pupil's safety, and encourage attendance if appropriate.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Since the previous inspection, school leaders have successfully raised both the aspirations and expectations of teachers and their pupils. This, coupled with improvements to aspects of the curriculum, particularly in mathematics, and the quality of teaching over time, means that, from the varying starting points, pupils across the school are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Very small numbers of pupils in each year group means that the standards that pupils reach can vary widely from year to year. Inspection evidence from reviewing work in pupils' books, along with the school's own data, shows that from their varying starting points, pupils are making consistently good progress across the school.
- Pupils in Year 4 are demonstrating particularly rapid progress. Their outcomes are usually higher than those expected for their age. Pupils leave Otterburn First well prepared for learning in Year 5.
- Pupils currently in Years 1 to 3 are making good progress from their previous starting points. The school's own assessment, moderated with other schools, shows that pupils currently in Year 2 are working at levels that are much higher than in 2015 and are at least in line with national averages.
- Pupils of all abilities achieve well. The most able are usually stretched to make more rapid progress so that they achieve the levels they are capable of. Swift identification of pupils who have special educational needs or disability ensures that additional support is quickly established.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been improving in recent years. In 2015, all pupils reached the expected standard. Pupils say they enjoy reading and do so every night at home and every day at school. This shows in the high standards of reading heard by the inspector. Older pupils have a good knowledge of the difference between fiction and non-fiction and the different elements of a novel.
- Pupils show more confidence and skill in their writing than reported at the previous inspection. The older, most-able pupils show this in their ability to successfully translate a piece of written work into poetry, for example. Pupils give good attention to ensuring that they use the correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Achievement in mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 can quickly recall basic calculation facts and the most able apply and use these skills independently. However, pupils are not always given enough opportunities to use and apply their skills to problem-solving.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is well led and managed.
- Most children enter Reception with skills that are in line with those typical for their age. Children make good progress through the Reception Year and most achieve a good level of development.
- The quality of teaching is good. From the time children start school, good links with parents are established. Parents contribute to their child's 'Learning Journal', a record of their achievement and progress, and can access this at any time electronically. This means that they know how their child is progressing, and how they can help them at home to contribute to their learning and development.
- Staff build quickly on children's previous knowledge and learning, which enables them to learn quickly.
- Activities are interesting and motivating. For example, when planning out the story of the 'Pirate Treasure', the children dress up and go out and about the school on a treasure hunt, before returning to write their story.
- Children have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. They know routines well and follow them. They listen carefully to their teachers.

- The provision is well resourced internally and outdoors. Planning and observations are carefully linked, and monitored to ensure that children are accessing all areas of learning. The children also benefit from access to the pre-school room in the school, shared with the private provider.
- Reading, writing and mathematics is a focus for much of the learning. Children are showing excellent progress in their phonics knowledge, being able to write unknown words and short sentences using their knowledge of initial sounds and blends.
- Arrangements to make sure the children are safe meet requirements, with daily risk assessments taking place. Children learn how to play safely, such as when building with large plastic crates and balancing on them.

School details

Unique reference number	12215
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10002056

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

Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Shaw
Headteacher	Tina Henderson (acting)
Telephone number	01830 520283
Website	www.otterburn.northumberland.sch.uk
Email address	admin@otterburn.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 October 2013

Information about this school

- Otterburn First School is considerably smaller than the average-sized first school. Pupils are taught in two classes. The majority of pupils are brought into school by bus from a wide geographical area.
- All pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- There are no disadvantaged pupils at the school in receipt of pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school offers full-time early years provision for Reception-age children. An early years provider from the private sector delivers part-time early years provision for Nursery-age children on-site and did not form part of this inspection.
- Since the last inspection there have been a number of changes in staffing and leadership of the school. The school is led and managed by an acting headteacher (the previous deputy headteacher) since the end of the leasing arrangement of the previous executive headteacher in October 2015.
- The school is currently receiving support from a local leader in education who is the executive headteacher of Whittonstall and Broomley First Schools, the Tyne Valley Teaching School Alliance and the primary school commissioner from the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed four lessons, two of which were undertaken with the acting headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the governing body, the primary schools commissioner for the local authority, parents and pupils.
- The inspector heard pupils read, and looked at a range of their workbooks including literacy and mathematics.
- The inspector examined a range of documentation including the school's data pertaining to pupils' progress, the school self-evaluation and improvement plan, records relating to the checking of teaching and learning, and the performance management process.
- The inspector took account of the 27 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, the school's own parent survey analysis and the questionnaires completed by seven members of staff.
- The inspector also took into account the views of all the pupils from the pupil questionnaires returned.
- During this inspection, the inspector asked additional questions with regard to the development and impact of new assessment arrangements. The information will contribute to the Ofsted Annual Report this year.

Inspection team

Geoff Dorrity, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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