

Northside Primary School

Northside, Workington, Cumbria, CA14 1BD

Inspection dates

6–7 October 2015

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have not set a clear direction for the school. Weaknesses in pupils' achievement and teaching, identified at the last inspection, remain.
- Leaders do not have sufficient understanding of the most important improvements that are needed. Checks on teaching and self-evaluation are not probing enough.
- Pupils do not do as well as they should, especially in writing and mathematics. Outcomes in national assessments declined in 2015 and too many pupils left the school insufficiently prepared for their secondary education.
- Pupils currently in school make inadequate progress because teaching does not meet all their learning needs. Activities are sometimes too difficult, and at other times provide little opportunity for relevant new learning.
- Pupils' language, literacy and mathematical skills are not developed well enough. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge or to write at length.
- Assessment is not used effectively to make sure pupils make steady progress in lessons and over time.
- Provision in the early years does not meet the needs of children. Planning for children's learning, and assessment of their achievement are ineffective.
- Pupils' personal development and behaviour require improvement. Pupils do not acquire confidence in persevering with challenging tasks or contributing their views. They have limited understanding of different cultures and life in modern Britain outside their immediate experience.
- Governors are not adequately informed and have too little understanding of the challenges facing the school. Consequently, they are not able to hold leaders to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are safe and happy at school. Their welfare is promoted well, particularly that of the most vulnerable pupils. Leaders are using effective strategies to raise attendance.
- There is some lively and engaging teaching for the oldest pupils in school.
- There have been improvements in marking and the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make).
- Leaders have introduced a range of activities after school, which pupils thoroughly enjoy.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring leaders provide clear direction for the school that motivates and inspires staff and pupils
 - ensuring self-evaluation includes in-depth analysis of pupils' achievement in each year group and that the impact of actions taken is evaluated fully
 - ensuring that improvement planning is effective and sets out timely and clear strategies to tackle weaknesses in teaching and raise pupils' achievement
 - ensuring that checks on teaching give sufficient attention to the progress of different groups of pupils, particularly the most-able and disadvantaged pupils
 - reviewing teachers' and teaching assistants' subject knowledge, especially in mathematics, and making sure they are provided with professional development to extend their knowledge and skills.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - making sure the activities planned by teachers build on pupils' prior learning, maintain pupils' interest, and are appropriate for their age, ability and learning needs
 - assessing pupils' learning in lessons and adapting teaching if it is not extending their knowledge, skills or understanding
 - giving pupils opportunities to investigate, solve problems and write at length so they learn to persevere with challenging tasks and develop confidence in their own ability
 - improving questioning and discussion in lessons so pupils can contribute and explore ideas
 - ensuring pupils are taught about British values such as democracy and about different cultures and life in modern Britain outside their immediate experience.
- Raise pupils' achievement in all subjects, especially in writing and mathematics, by:
 - making sure the most-able pupils are provided with work that extends their knowledge and skills
 - checking the impact of pupil premium funding, and making sure disadvantaged pupils are supported effectively to raise their achievement
 - enabling pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to challenging problems
 - developing pupils' vocabulary and grammar, punctuation and spelling in all subjects.
- Improve the early years provision by making sure that:
 - teaching assistants receive suitable guidance and appropriate professional development
 - assessment is linked with the early years areas of learning and informs planning for progression in each area
 - teachers and teaching assistants use opportunities to extend children's knowledge and skills during activities that children choose for themselves, particularly in developing their language, literacy and mathematical skills.
- Ensure governors are well informed about the performance of the school so that they can hold leaders to account effectively.

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

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders have not set a clear direction for the school that inspires and motivates staff or creates a culture of high ambition. They do not demonstrate the capacity to secure improvements in teaching and raise pupils' achievement. Consequently, pupils currently in the school are not making the progress they should because teaching does not meet their needs well enough.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is not probing enough to identify and correct key weaknesses in teaching and learning. As a result, leaders do not have an accurate view of barriers to improvement or of what should be done to remove them. The weaknesses identified at the last inspection have not been tackled successfully and school improvement planning does not set out precise strategies to prevent decline.
- Leaders do not pay enough attention to pupils' progress or the quality of pupils' work when they are observing teaching and checking pupils' books. The feedback given to teachers does not help them to improve key aspects, such as the appropriateness of work to pupils' ability and age, the quality of their questioning or their understanding of the subject.
- The performance of teachers is not managed effectively because weaknesses in teaching are not tackled with clarity. Professional development is not tailored to teachers' and teaching assistants' particular needs, for example in improving subject knowledge in mathematics or knowledge of the early years curriculum.
- Pupils' social and moral development is promoted well. Their cultural and spiritual development requires improvement. Pupils are cooperative, respectful and sociable and they have a good understanding of right and wrong. Staff promote equality and foster positive relationships between pupils in school. However, pupils have a limited understanding of the different cultures in wider society in modern Britain, and of British values such as democracy. Opportunities to reflect on their experiences or use their imagination are also limited.
- The school covers all required subjects and pupils have a balanced timetable. However, planning for continuity and progression in learning are not effective enough. Pupils' language, literacy and mathematical skills are not developed systematically from the start, and teaching does not build on what pupils have already learnt from year to year. Pupils who are currently in Year 6 have gaps in their learning due to instability in teaching in the past. Teaching is more stable now, but planning is not robust enough to make sure pupils do not still have gaps in their learning. There is too much reliance on catch-up programmes and small-group support.
- The curriculum is enriched with interesting activities after school and at lunchtime, which pupils thoroughly enjoy. The additional physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used effectively to extend the skills of teachers and provide all pupils with a range of high-quality PE from sports coaches. Pupils talk enthusiastically about PE and have enjoyed participating in Cumbria's 'U dance festival'.
- The local authority has provided the school with intensive support, which started before the last inspection in October 2013. The support has been of good quality, including that from the headteacher at Silloth Primary School, who is a local leader of education (LLE). Support was having a positive impact as illustrated in the improvements in achievement in 2014. However, the positive impact of the support stalled with changes to staffing. The LLE has not been able to continue with the support that was being given.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are committed and want to do the best for pupils. Several have joined the governing body recently and are still getting to know the school. However, they have not been given sufficient information to enable them to fully understand the school's performance and to challenge leaders effectively. They have not been provided with documents such as the self-evaluation or the school improvement plan.
 - The Chair of the Governing Body has a fuller understanding of the challenges facing the school and sees the need for improvement.
 - Governors manage most of the school's finances well. They make sure staff only progress in salary when it is merited. However, they have not been able to ensure that pupil premium funding is targeted specifically and effectively to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in school are not narrowing.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils are, and feel, safe in school. Staff have received safeguarding training and safeguarding procedures are followed. The relevant checks have been carried out for all staff and volunteers. Vulnerable pupils' well-being is well supported through effective links with other agencies. Leaders have engaged with parents successfully to improve attendance and to make sure pupils' welfare needs are met in school.
- The school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Too much teaching across the school does not meet pupils' learning needs, so pupils do not make the progress they are capable of or attain as well as they should in each year group.
- Planning for learning is ineffective. Teaching does not build systematically on what pupils already know and can do, particularly when pupils experience a change of teacher or move to a different class. Pupils' progress slows at the start of the year as some pupils repeat what they can do already in mathematics. Expectations, for example of the quality and extent of written work, are not high enough.
- The activities that are planned in lessons too often do not achieve what teachers have identified, or help pupils to learn effectively. Consequently, pupils do not understand the purpose of activities and cannot talk confidently about what they are learning.
- Teaching does not meet pupils' needs because assessment is not used well enough in lessons or over time to make sure pupils are extending their knowledge and understanding. The activities pupils are given are too often pitched at the wrong level of difficulty for their age and ability. They are either too difficult or too easy.
- The resources that teachers use are not always appropriate for the age and ability of pupils. For example, information sheets provided for Year 1 pupils and texts used in Year 3 are beyond the reading capability of some pupils.
- Teaching is not effective in helping pupils extend their learning through questioning or discussion. Much of the discussion focuses on directing pupils to activities and does not enable them to explore their understanding or to contribute their ideas.
- Across the whole school, teachers' and teaching assistants' subject knowledge is not secure in some key aspects of the curriculum, particularly in mathematics and in the early years areas of learning.
- There is some lively and more engaging teaching in Year 5 and Year 6, where pupils make more progress. There are too many gaps in pupils' learning, however, to enable them to catch up entirely.
- Phonics teaching has improved since the last inspection and most pupils are developing their knowledge of letters and words effectively so that they can read with understanding.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is consistent and up to date. Marking is particularly effective in Year 5 and Year 6, where pupils understand how to improve their work and are given some effective challenges to extend their learning. Pupils present their work neatly in all classes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils do not develop confidence in learning or understanding of how to work things out for themselves as well as they could. They are too reliant on the teacher to direct them to the next stage of an activity, often because the purpose of the activity has not been explained well enough. Pupils have limited opportunities to investigate, solve problems or write at length, so they do not develop their ability to persevere with challenging tasks and think things through for themselves.
Pupils are, and feel, safe in school because they feel well cared for and know they can talk to teachers if they have concerns. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet and when they are outside around roads and railways.
- Pupils' physical and emotional well-being is promoted well. Teachers have created positive relationships with pupils, so pupils are happy in school and feel secure. Vulnerable pupils receive effective support through the school's links with a range of agencies.

- Pupils know about different types of bullying, and older pupils are aware that they should not hurt others by name-calling, including using language that refers to appearance, race or sexuality. They say that sometimes friends fall out in school but that teachers help them to sort their differences out. They do not think there is any bullying in school and inspectors saw no evidence to the contrary.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils are cooperative and willingly follow directions in lessons. They show respect for staff and for each other and learning is rarely disrupted due to poor behaviour.
- There are times, however, when pupils' attention wanders off-task because they are not sure what they should do or are not stimulated to learn by the activity provided.
- Pupils behave well around school and in the playground. They look after the environment and appreciate the many interesting activities they can enjoy outside at playtimes. They play together happily.
- Parents feel their children are happy to come to school and are kept safe. This is reflected in the improvements in attendance. Persistent absenteeism has reduced and overall attendance is much improved from previously low levels to be in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- The number of pupils is too small to make meaningful comparisons with national averages for attainment and progress in standardised assessments, year by year. However, it is clear that the significant improvements in the progress made by pupils that were evident in 2014 were not sustained in 2015 and are not evident now in pupils' books.
- In mathematics, less than half the pupils attained the expected standards in the Year 6 standardised assessments in 2015, and many pupils did not make the progress they should have, given their prior attainment at Key Stage 1. Most pupils made expected progress in reading and writing, but very few made more than expected progress from their various starting points. Pupils' achievement in the phonics check has improved with better teaching in this area.
- Pupils who are currently in school are not making enough progress from their different starting points in each year group. Many pupils are not working at the expected standards for their age independently and with confidence because the activities they are given prevent them achieving to the level at which they are capable.
- Disadvantaged pupils make up a sizeable proportion of pupils in each cohort but there is too small a number to compare their attainment and progress with national averages. Disadvantaged pupils underachieve because the support they are receiving is not making enough of a difference.
- Pupils rarely attain the higher standards at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The most-able pupils in school do not achieve as well as they should in each year group as they are not provided with enough suitable activities to extend their knowledge and skills.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar, inadequate progress to their peers. Teaching and activities are not adapted sufficiently to meet their needs.
- Pupils' mathematical, communication and writing skills are not developed well enough to enable them to tackle the next stage of their education with confidence. Not enough is done to extend pupils' vocabulary and develop their ability to communicate their views and understanding. Grammar, punctuation and spelling are not promoted adequately in all subjects. Pupils' mathematical understanding and their ability to apply mathematical skills are insufficiently developed.
- Pupils' reading skills are developed more effectively. Most pupils say they enjoy reading at school. They are able to work out words using their phonic skills and read with fluency and understanding.

Early years provision is inadequate

- Children enter the Nursery Year with varied experiences and understanding. Often, their knowledge and skills are lower than those that are typical for children their age, particularly in speech and communication. Their physical skills are more developed and mostly typical for their age.
- In 2014, children made good progress from their various starting points and nearly all children achieved a good level of development by the time they left the Reception Year. These improvements have not been sustained, however. In 2015, fewer children reached a good level of development. The children currently in Nursery and Reception are not making the progress they should because their learning is not planned for well enough. They are not being prepared adequately for their move into Year 1.
- Children are well supervised and safe. They behave well, play together happily and feel well looked after. When they choose activities, they take turns and help each other, for example when building a tower or playing in the sand. They follow directions and are sensible when they are in the classroom and when they play outside. Parents are pleased that their children are happy and feel safe.
- Teaching does not adequately extend children's learning, especially their mathematical, writing, language and communication skills. The activities provided for them to choose from do not sufficiently maintain children's interest or give them opportunities to work things out for themselves.
- Assessments are not used effectively to plan for progression in each area of learning. The assessments are not linked with the different areas of learning and expected levels of development and are not used routinely to plan teaching that builds on what children already know and can do.
- Leadership of the early years is inadequate. The teaching assistants who are supporting children in the early years are not given enough direction and support and do not have enough experience in teaching in the early years to be able to plan effectively without it. Consequently, many opportunities to extend children's learning are missed, especially during activities that children choose for themselves.
- Additional funding is not targeted well enough to close the gaps for disadvantaged children, especially with regards to their speech and language development.

School details

Unique reference number	112142
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10002261

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Ann Lancaster
Headteacher	Samantha Dever
Telephone number	01900 62255
Website	www.northsideprimary.org
Email address	head@northside.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 October 2013

Information about this school

- Northside is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children in the care of a local authority.
- Nearly all pupils are white British. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average.
- Children in the early years are taught in a mixed-age class which includes children in Nursery and Reception, together with Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. They are withdrawn from this class for activities with teaching assistants.
- Mixed-age classes are also used for pupils in Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.
- There have been changes to staffing since the last inspection. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2015 and a teacher returned from maternity leave in July 2015.
- The school has been supported by the headteacher of Silloth Primary School, who is a local leader of education. Northside Primary School also receives intensive support from the local authority.
- The governments' current floor standards do not apply to this very small school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in each of the three mixed-age classes and of children in the early years who were withdrawn from the main class. Three observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also observed phonics teaching in small groups and listened to pupils read.
- The inspector scrutinised and evaluated pupils' work across all subjects alongside the school's information about pupils' progress. This was conducted with the headteacher.
- The inspector looked at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning, and policies and procedures to safeguard pupils.
- The inspector met with leaders, pupils, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and three governors, a representative of the local authority and the local leader of education who has provided support to the school.
- She met with a group of pupils to discuss their work and spoke with many other pupils during lessons and around the school.
- There were insufficient responses to assess Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. The inspector spoke with several parents at the school entrance at the start of the day and took account of a 'free text' response entered online.
- The views of staff were considered, informed by seven returns to the Ofsted questionnaire.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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