

Malvin's Close Primary Academy

Albion Way, Blyth NE24 5BL

Inspection dates

14–15 July 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is variable across the school. This means that rates of progress for pupils are inconsistent.
- The most able pupils are not being challenged to think deeply enough to apply their learning. They do not have enough activities which stretch them.
- Teachers often do not pick up pupils' misconceptions quickly enough. During lessons, this results in pupils carrying out activities which they have misunderstood.
- Teachers do not always follow the school's marking policy. Suggestions for improvement are not always helpful to improve learning and pupils do not always respond to the suggestions.
- There are inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make).
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to practise their writing skills. This means that some pupils are not making rapid progress to catch up.
- Outcomes by the end of Year 6 are too low. Not enough pupils are demonstrating the understanding needed to ensure that they are ready for the next stage in their education.
- Attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils remain wide in comparison to their peers. However, they are making similar rates of progress over time.

The school has the following strengths

- Since her appointment 18 months ago, the headteacher has been resolute in her determination to improve outcomes for all pupils. The quality of teaching and learning has improved during this time.
- The headteacher has created a distributed model of leadership where leaders take full ownership of their areas of responsibility. This means that leaders are now clear about the impact of their actions to improve.
- The local governing body knows the school's strengths and areas for improvement well. The members challenge leaders and have high expectations to improve outcomes.
- Leadership and provision in the early years is a strength of the school's work. Children make a good start to their educational journey because staff know them well and provide learning activities to engage them.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of good or better teaching and learning in order to improve outcomes for all pupils by ensuring that:
 - most-able pupils are challenged to think deeply during lessons
 - teachers identify and rectify misconceptions in pupils' work and during discussions more rapidly
 - teachers' marking of work complies with the school's policy by being focused on improving learning
 - pupils have time to respond to marking
 - pupils have more opportunities to practise their writing skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since her appointment 18 months ago, the headteacher has worked tirelessly to eradicate the weaknesses in teaching and learning and to address the legacy of inaccurate assessments which resulted in poor outcomes for pupils. While leaders and governors acknowledge that further improvements are necessary and imminent, they have made rapid improvements from the beginning of their journey, which has had a good impact on the amount of progress pupils are now making. The school is now well-placed to move forward to secure better outcomes for pupils.
- The headteacher is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and both know the school extremely well. Their plans for improvement have already had an impact, as demonstrated by the increasing progress being made by pupils. There are robust systems in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the plans. This results in refinements and amendments being made regularly in order to ensure that actions are focused successfully on improving outcomes for pupils.
- Staff morale is high. This is because the headteacher ensures that staff are well informed and that they understand the importance of the necessary improvements. They are given the help, support and guidance they need in order to make a difference for all pupils. Furthermore, the headteacher has given ownership to leaders, so that they not only have the skills to develop the areas they are responsible for, but also feel inspired to improve and refine practice using their own initiative.
- Although teaching is not yet good, it has improved considerably since the appointment of the new headteacher. Leaders tackle weaknesses systematically, and use informal and formal procedures to make sure improvements continue. This is because leaders, along with governors, are ambitious for pupils to succeed.
- Leaders apply rigorous performance management procedures so that teachers can be held to account for the progress their pupils make. Targets are set which tie closely to the identified areas for improvement in the school improvement plan, and are linked to pay progression. Directors of the Blyth Quays Trust ensure that this process is transparent and applied fairly.
- Staff training and development are a high priority. All staff have substantial opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge through well-planned professional development opportunities. Whole-school training, followed by subsequent updates, ensures that school-wide improvements are beginning to make an impact. Additionally, individual developmental needs are met through tailored opportunities being sought from either within the school, from the trust, or from wider partners.
- The special educational needs coordinator leads her area of responsibility successfully. She has a good understanding of the additional needs of pupils and works closely with parents, staff and external agencies when needed, to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are accurately identified and supported to achieve well.
- Collaborative work with leaders from other academies within the Blyth Quays Trust has strengthened the school's improvement. Opportunities for teachers and leaders to moderate how much progress pupils are making ensures that expectations are continually being challenged to be higher. This is very much driven by the headteacher from this school, as her expectations and standards are very high. When higher standards need to be exemplified, the headteacher seeks other schools outside of the trust, which have higher standards reflected in pupils' books, to demonstrate that pupils can achieve even more.
- The leadership team has organised the new curriculum to capture the pupils' interests successfully. The curriculum, along with enrichment activities and curriculum visits, for example to the Rising Sun Park to introduce the Stone Age, and to the Port of Blyth to find out how boats are made for a design technology project, is contributing to the improved rates of progress pupils are making across the school. Outdoor education residential opportunities for key stage 2 pupils and visits to local places of worship also enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These are complemented by a good range of very popular after-school clubs.
- Pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain is effective because they are taught about the importance of democracy, the rule of law and respect for other cultures and faiths. Pupils have opportunities to discuss important events and people from history and are encouraged to share their views about how the actions of others influence today's society. This is ensuring that pupils are developing a strong sense of responsibility.
- Sports premium funding is being used effectively to develop teachers' confidence in the teaching of skills in physical education. This has been achieved by using sports coaches, who also run clubs and festivals for the pupils to partake in. Participation rates for these activities and for competitions with local schools have risen significantly. In addition, pupils who are not as active as others are provided with activities and events which

enthuse them so that they want to lead more active lifestyles.

- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils has been a priority for leaders and governors since the arrival of the new headteacher. Systems to ensure accurate information about their achievements and progress were not in place prior to this. Procedures to check the impact of the significant additional funding for this group of pupils were not accurate and so it was hard to check if the funding was actually making a difference.
- In recognition of such weaknesses, leaders have secured support from a local authority officer. She has conducted a detailed review of the school's work for disadvantaged pupils. This work is ongoing but leaders now have a good understanding of pupils' progress from their different starting points and actions are being developed to further improve the progress they make in lessons and their attainment generally. However, the work is too recent to show its full impact. Consequently, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching expected levels in their development in the early years, in English and particularly in mathematics remains too variable across the school.
- External consultants are regularly used to provide an overview of how much progress leaders have made and what their impact is. While some of the information is useful to support improvement areas identified by school leaders, some of the documentation is overgenerous or is not evaluative enough to support further improvement. For example, one external report states 'progress is visible'. It does not clarify how much progress has been made or if the progress being made is good enough. The headteacher and deputy headteacher understand this and know exactly what needs to improve. Therefore, they do not need to rely on information from these weak external reviews in their own self-evaluation.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors know the school well and support the headteacher effectively in making the improvements which are necessary to secure better outcomes for the pupils. They challenge leaders regularly and hold them to account for the improvements being made.
 - Governors carry out their roles effectively because they receive relevant and focused training and guidance. Additionally, governors have a wide array of skills and knowledge from outside education which also strengthens the work and impact of the governing body.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet all statutory requirements. Procedures are firmly established and the day-to-day management, care and protection of pupils are secure. All staff and governors know the procedures and processes to ensure pupils are kept safe, and follow them robustly. Regular training for staff and thorough induction training for new members of staff mean that they all have an up-to-date knowledge of child protection requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not effective enough in all classes. As a result, the progress that pupils make is inconsistent, particularly in writing. It is not rapid enough to ensure that pupils catch up quickly enough from the legacy of previous underachievement in the school.
- The quality of teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is variable. There are some good examples where teachers are using a wide range of learning activities to help pupils to develop their phonics knowledge and skills. However, other pupils do not always get these experiences. Sometimes, the sounds of letters are not being taught correctly and staff are not modelling letter formation in the correct way. This is hindering the progress that some pupils are making.
- Pupils who are most able are not being challenged to think deeply enough and to extend their learning. During lessons, tasks and learning opportunities do not encourage those pupils to think for themselves and to work out solutions to problems. Often, most-able pupils are carrying out work which is too easy for them and this means that they are not achieving the standards they should be.
- The teaching of reading requires further improvement because pupils are not being taught how to read and analyse texts effectively. Newly designed and more focused guided reading sessions have improved this recently, but not enough for pupils to make the rapid improvement necessary. Additionally, many pupils are not secure in their word-building skills and some are unable to spell accurately.
- Opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in writing in subjects other than English are not embedded. This is resulting in pupils not having the confidence or time to improve, practise and hone their writing skills at a faster pace.
- Marking and feedback in pupils' books is being used to move learning on effectively in some classes and in some subjects, for example in key stage 1 mathematics. In these circumstances, teachers are using the school's marking policy appropriately. However, there is an inconsistent picture across the school. Where it is being used effectively, pupils are using the comments to build upon their prior learning. Where teachers are

not following the school's policy by not focusing the marking on making a difference to learning, or do not give pupils the time to respond to marking, pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable.

- Some teachers are using questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding across a wide range of subjects. This is ensuring that those teachers can use this knowledge to plan for the next steps in pupils' learning.
- There are very good relationships between adults and pupils in lessons. Where teaching is stronger, every opportunity is taken to develop pupils' learning. For example, during registration in Year 2, pupils were asked to write a sentence which they could use in their English lesson. In addition, teaching assistants are being well-deployed to support pupils with their learning.

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 are developing confidence in presenting their ideas and their learning. They work well with others in both groups and whole-class activities. Consequently, they are able to help and support each other as they develop their skills and abilities.
- Leaders have prioritised well-thought-through approaches to developing emotional well-being for all pupils. The pupils feel safe in the school, and staff have strategies for dealing with any anxieties and concerns pupils may have. Pupils can access therapeutic support which builds their resilience through discussion, creative work and through play.
- Pupils take their roles and responsibilities seriously around the school, which is enhancing their personal development. Pupils play active roles on the school council, eco-school's panel and as play leaders, where they help younger pupils to be more active on the playground.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in the school, in the community and in the wider world. Pupils talk confidently about keeping themselves safe online and know who to go to if they need help or are worried.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well-mannered and polite. As they move around the school, they conduct themselves sensibly, showing respect for others.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. Leaders have worked effectively to help both pupils and parents understand how to deal with incidents of bullying, and pupils feel confident that staff deal rapidly with any behavioural incident or bullying incident which needs addressing.
- Most pupils display good attitudes to their learning during lessons. During discussions, pupils talked about their successes and it was clear to see how proud they are when they work hard. However, on a few occasions, some pupils' learning is disrupted due to low-level chatter and off-task behaviour. This is normally when teaching is not challenging enough for those pupils.
- Pupils enjoy coming to the school and this is reflected in their good levels of attendance; this is above the national average. There are effective support systems in place to ensure that families who have not made sure their children attend regularly are now doing so, in addition to following up pupils who are not in the school on a daily basis.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' progress is still not consistently good in all classes and across all subjects; therefore, outcomes for pupils require improvement. However, as a result of recent improvements in teaching, effective procedures introduced to measure progress, leaders holding teachers more accountable and greater expectations from most teachers, progress is rising steadily.
- The standards that pupils attain by the time they leave for secondary school are too low. This is not least due to the history of previous underachievement of these pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils. Gaps between the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are too wide. The progress they make from their starting points, however, is improving and is similar to that of their peers.
- By the end of key stages 1 and 2, not enough pupils are attaining a greater level of understanding in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because pupils, particularly the most able, are not challenged

enough.

- The standards that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attain at the end of key stage 2, as for other groups, remain low. However, carefully targeted actions and support in class or in extra group work is ensuring that they make at least similar progress to their peers.
- The proportion of children who leave the early years with a good level of development has increased over time. In 2015, this proportion was broadly in line with the national average. From low starting points, children in the early years now make good progress.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics has improved over time and is above the national average.

Early years provision

is good

- Children join the early years with basic skills and knowledge below those typical for their age. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the time they leave Reception is increasing over time. In 2015 and 2016, the proportion was broadly in line with that found nationally. This is a result of a sustained improvement in the quality of teaching, enabling children to make a good start in their education. This means that more children are now ready for transition to Year 1.
- Leaders know the children well in the early years, and have carefully planned how they will improve the provision to meet their needs. Adults are careful to tailor activities to children's abilities and interests. They are ensuring that opportunities for mark-making are provided, both indoors and outdoors, and that accurate assessments allow teachers to plan activities in the environment and curriculum which are shaped by the needs and interests of the children.
- Disadvantaged children in the early years are achieving as well as their peers. Recent improvements to the tracking of these pupils, and the provision of more focused and precise activities to support the development of their knowledge and skills, mean that that these children are now catching up to where they should be by the time they join Year 1.
- Adults are effectively deployed to support and challenge children, both individually and in groups. They have a strong knowledge of how young children learn and develop, and are able to use questioning skilfully. Children's efforts are praised appropriately and challenge for them is ever-present. Such actions contribute well to children's good rates of progress.
- Relationships between adults and children are positive and respectful. As a result, children move around the areas without fuss and transitions between one activity and the other are very smooth.
- Children's behaviour is good because they are motivated by the activities and tasks provided; the environment is enticing and stimulates their imaginations well. It was delightful to watch the children investigating how fragile eggs are and puzzling about which materials could protect them or repair them. Adults were skilled in being able to use the children's questions and creativity in order to highlight the key learning points.
- Leaders and other staff have a clear and up-to-date knowledge and understanding of safeguarding practices; as a result, the environment is safe, orderly and secure. In addition, staff are extremely vigilant and display 'it could happen here' attitudes regarding the protection of the children in their care. Statutory welfare requirements are in place and embedded well.

School details

Unique reference number	139754
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10003433

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	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	474
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Val Campbell
Headteacher	Alison Nicholson
Telephone number	01670 354082
Website	www.malvinclose.northumberland.sch.uk/website
Email address	admin@malvinclose.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 March 2012

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Blyth Quays Trust.
- The school is larger than average.
- Children attend part time in Nursery and full time in Reception.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium is higher than average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for children looked after by the local authority and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- In 2015, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs its own breakfast club and offers a range of after-school activities.
- The school's website complies with statutory requirements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons and also made some short visits to classrooms. The headteacher jointly observed lessons with the lead inspector.
- Inspectors listened to a range of pupils read and reviewed the work in pupils' books.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break and lunchtime was observed.
- Inspectors talked informally to pupils in lessons and around the school and held formal meetings with pupils from across key stage 2 and a small group with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, subject leaders and class teachers, governors and the academy's school improvement partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, school improvement planning, and documents monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning. They also looked at minutes of governing body meetings, the school's own policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents during the inspection, as well as 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors took into account the views of the staff through the online staff survey.

Inspection team

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Margaret Farrow	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fiona Manuel	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Reeves	Her Majesty's Inspector
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