

Prudhoe Castle First School

Castle Road, Prudhoe, Northumberland NE42 6PH

Inspection dates

31 January – 1 February 2017

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	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

- Pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is inconsistent in key stage 1. This is because teaching does not enable pupils to do as well as they might.
- While standards are improving overall, there remains variability in the progress rates of pupils across the school. This is particularly the case in Years 1 and 2.
- The efforts that have been made to improve pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics have not been afforded to developing the same depth of learning in all subjects, particularly science.
- Although writing skills are strengthening, teachers do not take advantage of opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills in subjects other than English.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is improving. The new headteacher has a very clear vision for driving the school to be good. She is tenacious in her actions to achieve it.
- Provision in the early years is good. It stimulates children's curiosity and engagement. As a result, children make good progress and are well prepared for key stage 1.
- The quality of teaching and learning in key stage 2 is highly effective. It ensures that all pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Pupils are happy and say that they feel safe. Strong relationships are evident in this warm and welcoming school. This is endorsed by the views of parents and carers.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. Behaviour is good, which leads to a calm and orderly school.
- Although the school's overall effectiveness requires improvement, leaders' accurate evaluation of their work is ensuring that the right priorities for improvement are set. Leaders are driving improvement effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review curriculum provision to:
 - strengthen the quality of pupils' writing in subjects other than English
 - increase opportunities for pupils to develop their subject-specific skills, particularly in science.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching and hence outcomes of pupils in Years 1 and 2 by ensuring that:
 - work is well matched to pupils' needs and abilities
 - pupils achieve their potential by making rapid progress and gaps in their learning are tackled.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- There has been significant turbulence to the leadership of the school since it was last inspected. This led to a steep decline in pupils' outcomes and to the quality of teaching in the school.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher has brought much-needed stability to the school. Despite her best efforts, there has been insufficient time to eradicate teaching that requires improvement and to address fully the gaps that exist in pupils' learning.
- The headteacher is determined to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to secure good outcomes for all pupils. She knows precisely where to focus her efforts. She demonstrates strong leadership in the rigour and energy shown in addressing underperformance. Together with the deputy headteacher, they make an effective team to tackle the issues the school faces.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is delivered through a topic-based approach. Quality texts are used to stimulate pupils' interests. Pupils talk excitedly about their learning. However, leaders have not ensured that pupils' subject-specific skills are taught as rigorously as those of literacy and numeracy. This is particularly the case in science.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is reflected in the improvement plans, which pinpoint precisely the necessary actions to bring about improvement. They form part of the wider strategic overview that sets out the vision for improvement.
- Subject leaders are recently appointed. They demonstrate great enthusiasm and tenacity and are clear where there are strengths in their subjects and what needs to be done to improve pupils' outcomes. They are involved in checking the impact of their work in improving teaching and learning across the school. Although contributing to the strengthening profile of pupils' achievement, there has not been sufficient time for their work to show in improvements in the proportions of pupils reaching age-related expectations.
- The deputy headteacher has assumed responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. She has quickly implemented rigorous procedures for identification and referral to specialist agencies where required. Policies and procedures are now compliant with legislation and parents are now fully involved in decision-making. As a result, outcomes for this key group of pupils are accelerating, particularly in key stage 2 and in the early years. Additional special educational needs funding is used effectively.
- There is a strong commitment to the provision of regular, high-quality support and training for all staff. This is to ensure that everyone is fully aware of, and lives up to, the high expectations of leaders at Prudhoe Castle. The impact of this work can be seen particularly in the rapid improvements that have been secured within the early years.
- The headteacher has established improved appraisal procedures for all staff. These are demanding in their expectations and are differentiated according to responsibilities.

However, it is too soon in their development to show the full impact intended in improving the quality of teaching and learning consistently across the school.

- The physical education (PE) and sports grant for primary schools is spent wisely. It is used to employ the services of a sports coach to strengthen the teaching of PE and to provide a range of after-school clubs. This is contributing to pupils' growing enthusiasm towards sport and their increasing awareness of how to keep themselves fit and healthy.
- Leaders use the small amount of pupil premium funding well to support disadvantaged pupils' academic, personal and social development. External agencies are secured to support pupils to overcome any difficulties they face in their learning. The support received from the speech and language service is particularly effective in improving the communication skills of children in the early years.
- Pupils are encouraged to think about themselves as citizens of the world successfully through a detailed programme of assemblies. A question is posed at the start of the week to engage pupils in world issues. The question 'How important is trade?' received responses from pupils that reflect their growing maturity. One response was: 'If we didn't have new things we would become narrow-minded'.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the promotion of fundamental British values are explicitly and effectively taught. The impact of this work is embodied in the good attitudes to learning demonstrated by all pupils and the strong and inclusive relationships that exist in school.
- Leaders are committed to ensuring that all pupils have equality of opportunity and that additional support is provided where needed, in order that all pupils can achieve their potential.
- In the past, parents expressed their concerns about the leadership of the school. As a result of the assiduous work undertaken by the headteacher, they are now overwhelmingly supportive. This is reflected in the high number of positive responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Parents welcome the stability that the headteacher has brought and are delighted with the improvements she has made. One parent's response encapsulates many others' views: 'The headteacher has returned the school to the heart of the community. My son looks forward every day to such a warm and welcoming school.'
- Since the last inspection, the local authority has provided extensive support to minimise the impact of the high levels of staffing turbulence. While the leadership of the school is now secure, the school's improvement partner continues to offer extended support to the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors acknowledge the very difficult time the school has endured. They do not hide behind this and recognise the issues the school still faces.
- The membership of the governing body has been strengthened by recent local authority appointed governors. Minutes of meetings are reflective of the increased level of challenge and questioning now given to school leaders.
- Governors have an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses gained from their

increasingly strong role in monitoring the effectiveness of leaders' actions. They use their collective skills well to direct the focus of their work. However, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of their work to secure improvement to the overall effectiveness of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. A culture of safeguarding is evident from entry to the school. A leaflet detailing all safeguarding arrangements and expectations is shared with visitors.
- The designated safeguarding governor undertakes regular checks of the school and uses her skills well to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.
- A programme of training and thorough induction procedures ensure that all staff have a very good understanding of their responsibilities and what is expected of them. There are clear processes for staff to report any concerns. Record-keeping is chronological and detailed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable across the school, particularly in Years 1 and 2. This means that outcomes for pupils in these year groups are not good enough. Because work is not consistently well matched to pupils' needs, gaps in pupils' learning are evident.
- Pupils demonstrate great enthusiasm for learning. However, they do not receive sufficient opportunities to apply their skills in specific subjects, particularly science. This means that the standards pupils reach vary between different subjects.
- Teaching is much stronger in key stage 2, where information from the assessment of pupils' progress is used exceptionally well to match activities to pupils' learning needs and abilities, including for the most able. This level of focused teaching and intervention ensures that any gaps in pupils' learning are closed rapidly. Highly effective questioning makes pupils think hard about their work.
- In all classes, teaching assistants are used well to support pupils in their learning by offering timely support to individuals and small groups.
- High expectations are set for the standard of handwriting and presentation of pupils' work. A presentation charter is signed by all pupils at the start of each new book. All staff give timely reminders of these expectations. This is contributing to the highly positive attitudes demonstrated by pupils towards their learning and the increasingly good standard of writing seen in pupils' workbooks.
- The teaching of reading is strengthening. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to reading and are heard to read every day. A daily guided-reading session supports pupils' developing comprehension skills effectively. Great thought goes into choosing the books to be studied, so that they both challenge and interest pupils.
- The teaching of phonics has improved considerably and in 2016 the proportions of pupils reaching the required standard in the national phonics check were in line with

national averages. This represents considerable improvement from previous years.

- Pupils are taught to write for different purposes and for different audiences and this is linked well to the topic being studied. The teaching of English spelling, grammar and punctuation supports this process and there is evidence of pupils applying their skills directly into their independent writing. However, there are missed opportunities for pupils to reinforce their use of different writing styles in subjects other than English. This is particularly the case in science.
- Teachers ensure that pupils receive opportunities to work practically and use resources to support their mathematical understanding. Priority is given to 'taking mathematics outdoors', so that pupils can demonstrate the practical application of their skills. In talking to pupils and reviewing their work, this is having a positive impact on improving outcomes, particularly in key stage 2. It is less effective in Years 1 and 2, where pupils' confidence and accuracy in basic skills are not fully embedded.
- Homework is set in line with the school's policy and is linked to the topic work being studied in school. It is contributing to improving pupils' outcomes, with pupils keen to share their love of homework. This view is endorsed by parents: 'Homework stretches my child and is keeping him motivated.'
- The teaching of information and communication technology is a strength of the school. Pupils demonstrate great enthusiasm for the subject. They are acquiring coding skills well and accurately evaluate the impact of their work. Year 2 pupils enthusiastically demonstrated the codes they had written to make their robot jump, and were equally enthusiastic to adjust this to include a 'turbo boost' for acceleration.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Prudhoe Castle is a happy school where pupils feel supported and safe. This is reflected in the rates of attendance, which are above average.
- Great emphasis is placed upon pupils' well-being and this is central to the strong relationships that form the heart of this welcoming school. This brings great security to pupils, who overwhelmingly say that they feel supported by their teachers.
- Pupils' personal and social development and a detailed programme of assemblies contribute well to pupils' growing understanding of fundamental British values.
- Pupils take great pride in their work and are very proud of their achievements. An example of this came from one pupil who, when showing work to the inspector, said: 'I'm really proud of my presentation. I have worked so hard at it'.
- Pupils have a good awareness of bullying in all its forms and how to keep themselves safe. They know the steps to take to keep themselves safe when using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils display good attitudes and are enthusiastic about their learning, even when

learning tasks are not well matched to their needs.

- Playtimes are well organised and well resourced. Pupils in Year 4 provide a 'buddy' service to younger pupils who are reticent to join in. This further cements the strong relationships within the school.
- There are very clear systems to ensure that behaviour is well managed. There are very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour, but when they do occur pupils say that they are dealt with quickly and effectively. There have been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions at the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Since the school was last inspected, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics declined and in 2014 and 2015 they were significantly below the national average. This represented inadequate achievement from pupils' starting points and has left a legacy of inconsistent achievement.
- In 2016, as a result of intensive support and intervention, pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 were greatly improved. The proportions of Year 2 pupils reaching the expected standard in reading and writing were above the national average, as were the proportions of pupils reaching greater depth in reading and mathematics.
- Much has been done to address the inconsistencies in pupils' achievement in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics and there is a strengthening picture of outcomes for current pupils in these subjects. However, outcomes in other subjects are more variable, particularly in science, where outcomes were below national averages in 2016.
- Strong teaching in key stage 2 is ensuring that pupils are making rapid progress to close the gaps that exist in their learning. Outcomes for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics are strengthening, with the vast majority of pupils set to reach age-related expectations. Good progress is evident in pupils' books.
- Although pupils are making expected progress overall in key stage 1, there is greater variability in the progress evident within pupils' books.
- Outcomes for most able pupils are strengthening. The rise in the proportion of pupils reaching greater depth in 2016 is on track to continue in 2017.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils are well supported and their progress is in line with that of their peers.
- Outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are strengthening. This is the result of more effective identification, support and more robust systems and procedures that have been introduced. In Years 3 and 4, this is leading to accelerated progress for this group of pupils. This is not the case in Years 1 and 2.

Early years provision

Good

- The majority of children enter the early years with skills that are broadly typical for their age. Teachers complete detailed assessments to ensure that all work is well

matched to children's needs and interests. Consequently, children make good progress from their starting points and there has been year-on-year improvement in the proportion of children reaching the expected standard by the end of Reception.

- Staff within the early years are highly skilled and use questioning effectively to probe children's thinking and extend their learning. As a result, children are curious about the world around them.
- Outdoor provision is well organised and well considered and offers a wide range of learning opportunities in which children can explore and build their skills. Children are able to sustain interest because of the quality of resources available and the skilful intervention of adults.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective, with children making rapid progress in acquiring skills. Every opportunity is taken to reinforce these skills in the development of early writing and mark-making.
- Progress in personal and social and emotional development is good and this accounts for the strengths seen in children's behaviour and in their relationships with adults. Children are encouraged to take turns and to consider others, which is exemplified by a child's response to work being completed on Humpty Dumpty's fall: 'Humpty Dumpty's having a bad day!'
- Learning journals provide an accurate picture of the key stages in a child's development and they provide a treasured record for parents of their children's achievements.
- The early years leader has great enthusiasm for her role. She understands the learning needs of very young children and has successfully created a stimulating learning environment that is focused and purposeful and in which children can thrive.

School details

Unique reference number	122218
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10023897

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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Richardson
Headteacher	Mrs Tammy Allen
Telephone number	01661 833122
Website	www.prudhoeschools.co.uk
Email address	admin@prudhoecastle.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and none speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average.
- The early years provision consists of one Reception class.
- The school offers breakfast and after-school childcare provision.

- There have been significant changes to the staffing team since the school's last inspection, including the appointment of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and early years leader.
- The governing body has undergone several changes, with the appointment of a new chair and vice-chair and several recently co-opted members.
- The government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6, do not apply to this school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils learning in 10 different lessons; all were observed jointly with the headteacher of the school.
- In addition, the inspector looked at samples of pupils' work in a range of subjects and listened to pupils read from Year 1, Year 2 and Year 4.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils, the headteacher, senior leaders and members of the governing body, as well as representatives from the local authority.
- In addition to meeting with parents, the inspector took account of 23 responses to the parent free text facility, 39 responses to the online parental questionnaire, Parent View, as well as findings from the school's own parental consultation.
- Information from the school about pupils' recent and current progress was examined, as well as the school's evaluation of how well it is doing and records of leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching. Records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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