

Linton Primary School

Linton, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 5SG

Inspection dates

8–9 March 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	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils have not made strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics over time.
- The most able pupils do not make enough progress in both the lower and upper school. Pupils' basic skills across the school are weak.
- Over time, additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has not ensured that these pupils reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers' and teaching assistants' expectations of their pupils are not high enough. The work that teachers plan and provide for pupils is not matched closely enough to their needs and abilities.
- Subject leadership is not strong.
- The curriculum requires further development. Although improving rapidly, it is not yet fit for purpose, especially in the upper school.
- Pupils' attendance is too low and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is too high.
- Pupils report that there are too many incidents of name-calling, including homophobic name-calling.
- Governance is not robust. Governors were unaware of the poor progress made by pupils until the new headteacher's arrival. They were shocked by the results of the checks she made.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. She has prioritised the areas for improvement carefully and implemented incisive plans for improvement robustly. Staff morale is high.
- Overall, pupils have made stronger progress since September 2016 than previously. Pupils are currently making better progress in the lower school (early years and key stage 1) than they are in the upper school (key stage 2).
- The vast majority of pupils attend the school's newly provided breakfast club. They start the school day well-nourished and ready to learn.
- Pupils' personal, social and health education has been strengthened. As a result, pupils' behaviour is beginning to improve.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much improved since the new headteacher, who is also the coordinator for special educational needs (SENCo), took up post.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils by:
 - Ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants have the very highest expectations of their pupils, especially the most able
 - taking rapid action to improve pupils' basic skills in both English and mathematics
 - matching the work that teachers provide for pupils much more closely to their needs and capabilities.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare further by:
 - increasing further pupils' ability to pay attention and concentrate for extended periods of time, especially in the upper school
 - reducing incidents of name-calling, including homophobic name-calling
 - improving pupils' attendance and reducing the number who are persistently absent.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of the school by:
 - developing a curriculum which meets the needs of the pupils in mixed-age classes
 - ensuring that subject leaders have the skills and knowledge to lead their subjects effectively
 - embedding assessment systems and procedures across the school.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The appointment of the new headteacher has brought about a sea-change in the school's, and its pupils', fortunes. On taking up post in September 2016, the headteacher checked each area of the school's work robustly. She evaluated the school's strengths and areas for development incisively and reported her findings quickly to the governing body and the local authority. The headteacher implemented a carefully prioritised plan to rapidly improve the school within the first few weeks of the current academic year. As a result, pupils are beginning to make better progress, especially in the lower school. Staff have trust in the new headteacher. Staff morale is high. During the inspection, a member of staff commented that, 'New life has been granted to Linton Primary School.'
- The curriculum requires further development. It does not meet the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes well enough. As a result, pupils' basic skills are weak and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Subject leadership needs further development. The headteacher knows that teachers need informed advice and training about how to plan for all subjects, but especially mathematics, in mixed-age classes. A check on pupils' mathematics workbooks showed that younger pupils, who have yet to secure an expertise in the Year 3 curriculum, are completing some activities usually planned for pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Leaders have not ensured that the additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils is used well. Disadvantaged pupils, over time, do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Systems and procedures to track the attainment and progress of pupils more effectively have been established. Although at a very early stage of development, leaders are able to judge which pupils are making/not making sufficient progress from their individual starting points more robustly.
- The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education has been strengthened this year in line with the headteacher's high expectations of individual pupils' behaviour. Although behaviour remains an area for development, especially in the upper school, the school's records show a reduction in incidents of unacceptable behaviour in lessons and during the more unstructured times of the school day.
- Extra-curricular activities now support the school's formal curriculum effectively. Pupils enjoyed and benefited from attending art club during the first half of the spring term. Currently, coding club is enabling pupils to develop their computing skills to a larger extent.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is growing in strength. Pupils now have opportunities to take part in and benefit from a greater range of educational visits. Assemblies are well planned and include time for the pupils to reflect. They have included such themes as valuing people's individual differences, the international day for tolerance and the importance of friendship. Pupils learn a great deal about British values during assemblies.
- The physical education (PE) and sport funding for primary schools is spent judiciously

to improve the expertise of both staff and pupils.

- The provision of the breakfast club has had a beneficial impact on school life. A greater proportion of pupils are punctual for school every day. Pupils' ability to concentrate during morning lessons has been enhanced because they are well nourished and have had time to socialise with their friends and adults who they trust.
- The SENCo has ensured that the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are met increasingly well. She has sought out appropriate and high-quality support for pupils with very specific needs. A parent told the inspector that their child's progress has been 'fantastic' since September. The government's additional funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is now used well to improve the provision for their specific needs.
- The local authority's school improvement partner provided an insightful review of the school's effectiveness during the autumn term that validated the headteacher's initial judgements. Officers from the local authority have provided the new headteacher with sound advice and support, especially in relation to pupils' behaviour, since she took up post. The local authority has not supported the school as well in strengthening governance.

Governance of the school

- Governance is not strong.
- Governors were surprised by the headteacher's initial evaluation that the school's overall effectiveness required improvement.
- Governors, who have started to ask the headteacher questions about pupils' progress, do not challenge robustly enough. As a result, they have insufficient knowledge about the progress made by different groups (including pupils who have special educational needs and/or difficulties, disadvantaged pupils and the most able pupils) across the school.
- Governors are willing and anxious to improve. They understand that they do not have the required skills to challenge leaders in all areas of the school's work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's record of employment checks was fully compliant with requirements at the very beginning of the inspection.
- Leaders ensure that staff access appropriate training in a timely manner. For example, in response to concerns about the behaviour of a small minority of pupils, the headteacher organised training for staff on how to manage actual or potential aggression.
- There is a sound culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Posters, including in the staff toilet cubicles, remind staff about the procedures for addressing safeguarding concerns immediately and robustly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school.
- Teachers' and teaching assistants' expectations of pupils, in terms of academic progress and behaviour, are too variable. They are not high enough as a matter of course, especially for the most able pupils. Pupils do not complete work that enables them routinely to make rapid progress. Sometimes in creative writing, all of the pupils in Years 3, 4 and 6 use the same small writing frames. As identified by the school improvement partner, this limits the productivity of all pupils, but especially the most able.
- Teaching over time has not ensured that pupils have a sound knowledge of basic skills. The younger pupils do not have a secure knowledge of their number bonds. The older pupils do not have immediate recall of their multiplication tables. In handwriting, staff do not ensure that upper and lower case letters are formed correctly, are of the right size and are joined in accordance with the school's scheme.
- Teaching in phonics in the lower school is growing in strength. However, the older pupils misspell words routinely because their knowledge of phonics and spelling patterns is weak. Staff do not address the common errors made by pupils in key stage 2 robustly enough. As a result, some pupils make the same mistakes over and over again.
- Teachers now have access to more robust assessments of their pupils' achievements from their starting points. As a result, teachers are better equipped to plan work at the right level to ensure that pupils make better progress.
- Peripatetic music teaching is strong. All of the pupils in Years 3, 4 and 6 understand an increasing range of subject specific vocabulary and can play identifiable notes on the tenor horn. Their upper school ensemble played recognisable tunes, loudly and with gusto, during the inspection.
- Since the beginning of the academic year, teaching in personal, social and health education has been increasingly robust. Teachers have led pupils' investigations into feelings such as 'anger' successfully. Pupils described anger as having scary eyes, a fiery head and stamping feet. Some pupils recognised aspects of their own behaviour in anger and, since that time, their behaviour has begun to improve.

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, especially in the upper school, are not confident learners. They require constant support and encouragement to 'have a go' and have not developed that inner resilience to keep going when work is tricky and challenging.
- Pupils in the lower school are developing confidence at a much more rapid rate. For example, during work outdoors following the teacher's reading of 'The Tin Forest' by

Helen Ward, a child in the Reception Year was asked to find a toucan. The child, with some exasperation, confidently stated, 'There are no toucans in the village of Linton!' The child had strong knowledge and understanding of the world and the confidence to state her views.

- Pupils understand and can explain the various forms that bullying can take. They are confident that staff will deal with any issues that arise. However, they are unhappy that, despite assertive action taken by the headteacher, some pupils still use the term 'gay' as a name-calling word in school.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. They, alongside the staff and the governors, have experienced recent training in online safety. Pupils know that they must not share their personal details with strangers. They understand that their privacy settings must be strong.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Staff, parents and pupils were concerned about the standard of behaviour in the school during the autumn term. Acting upon concerns, the headteacher implemented reward systems that include the earning and spending of 'Linton pounds'. As a result, the number of incidents of poor behaviour more than halved between the last seven weeks of the autumn term and the first seven weeks of the spring term. Behaviour remains high on the school's improvement agenda.
- Pupils' punctuality has improved. The vast majority attend breakfast club and arrive on time for school every day.
- Despite the increased profile given to attendance since the beginning of the academic year, too many pupils have poor attendance and too many pupils are persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes over time have not been strong enough. Only half of the children have reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception class over the last three years. Over time, pupils have not made good enough progress in key stage 1 to reach standards in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's assessment information confirms progress over time in English and mathematics is also too slow in key stage 2.
- Over time, all groups of pupils (including boys, girls, the disadvantaged, the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities) have not made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in the lower and upper school.
- Currently, pupils in the lower school are making better progress to reach age-related expectations by the end of the school year. However, progress remains slow in the older year groups because pupils have many gaps in their knowledge that have not been addressed. The most able pupils are not making good enough progress in both the lower and upper school.

- The pupils currently in the lower school are being prepared well for the demands of key stage 2. The pupils in the upper school have some way to go to be well prepared for the demands of high school and key stage 3.
- Pupils are making better progress in their acquisition of phonics. Last year, for the first time, all of the very small number of pupils reached the standard in the Year 1 check on phonics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are also making better academic progress because their emotional needs are being well met.
- Pupils are making better progress in subject areas such as music and PE because they access expert tuition.

School details

Unique reference number	122199
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10001035

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorraine Watson
Headteacher	Samantha Mason
Telephone number	01670 860 361
Website	www.linton.northumberland.sch.uk
Email address	admin@linton.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 September 2011

Information about this school

- The school, previously a first school, became a primary school on 1 September 2015.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. There are three children in the early years foundation stage, nine pupils in key stage 1 and 12 pupils in key stage 2. Pupils are taught in two classes. The lower school pupils, those children in the early years and the pupils in Years 1 and 2, are taught in class 1. The upper school pupils, those pupils in Years 3, 4 and 6, are taught in class 2. There are no pupils in Year 5.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for support through the pupil premium, is above average.
- Most pupils are of white British heritage. A third of the pupils are of Gypsy/Roma heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities

receiving support is well above the national average. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

- A new headteacher, a new teacher, a new teaching assistant and a new chair of the governing body took up post in the autumn term 2016.
- The school, by the end of the inspection, met requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited nine part-lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher, and also visited an act of collective worship.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and four governors, including the chair and the vice-chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with an officer from Northumberland local authority.
- The inspector spoke informally to pupils in lessons and at various times during each day. She also spoke formally with a group of pupils from Years 2, 3, 4 and 6. The inspector considered the school's surveys of pupils' views, which were on display in the school's dining hall.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of pupils' workbooks and information about pupils' current progress in lessons. She also reviewed a number of documents including the school's improvement plan, attendance records, information relating to the work the school does to keep pupils safe, headteacher's reports to governors, minutes of meetings of the governing body and the school improvement partner's monitoring reports.
- Online questionnaire returns submitted by four members of staff and the school's own recent survey of staff views were taken into consideration.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, to register. However, the inspector took account of two parental responses to the free-text option on Parent View. The inspector also spoke to parents in the playground and noted the results of the school's recent survey of parental views.
- Pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 read with the inspector.

Inspection team

Belita Scott, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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