

Wooler First School

Brewery Road, Wooler, Northumberland NE71 6QF

Inspection dates

23–24 May 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have effectively managed the transition to a shared site as reflected in the good and improving progress pupils have made over the last two years.
- Leaders and governors have improved provision for the local community by taking on responsibilities for nursery education and providing an effective foundation to learning in the early years.
- Teachers have responded well to the demands of the new national curriculum, achieving outcomes in 2016 that were consistently above those seen nationally. Outcomes in reading and writing were particularly strong.
- The teaching of reading is a consistent strength across the school. Outcomes in the phonics screening check have consistently improved and in 2016 were significantly above those seen nationally.
- Although pupils make good progress in mathematics, this progress is not as rapid across phases as in English. This is because pupils, including children in the early years, are not given consistent opportunities to work at greater depth.
- Pupils gain access to unique curriculum experiences such as swimming for all and outdoors learning in the woods. As a result, pupils develop their self-confidence, resilience and ability to manage risk.
- Systems to monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are improving and, as a result, these pupils are making improving rates of progress.
- Although pupils show tolerance and kindness towards others, leaders are not doing enough actively to raise awareness of equalities, particularly those relating to different types of families and sexual orientation.
- Although pupils are given opportunities to explore science and geography through their learning in the woods, they do not explore these subjects with sufficient depth in their topic lessons.
- The vast majority of pupils are welcoming and well behaved. New behaviour-monitoring systems show steady improvements in behaviour, although a minority of pupils and parents remain concerned over some aspects of behaviour and bullying.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by :
 - providing more opportunities for children and pupils to work at greater depth in mathematics across all phases, including in the early years
 - providing more consistent challenge for the most able pupils
 - ensuring that opportunities to explore nature, science and geography in outdoor learning are complemented by more robust science and geography teaching in topic lessons.
- Develop pupils' personal development and welfare by:
 - strengthening work to promote equalities by addressing issues such as sexual orientation and different family structures more clearly
 - listening closely and responding to the minority of pupils and parents who have concerns over aspects of behaviour
 - providing more regular and formal opportunities to capture pupils' views.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher and governors have effectively managed the move to a shared site with the Glendale Middle School. Pupils are settled in their new premises and are making good progress, as reflected in the improving outcomes achieved in both 2015 and 2016.
- Senior leaders and governors have responded to community needs by taking on responsibility for the main source of nursery provision in the town after it was threatened with closure. They have developed effective provision that is improving continuity between the early years and key stage 1.
- Leaders track pupils' progress at regular intervals in order to identify pupils at risk of underachievement. Pupils' outcomes are moderated with local authority partners to check their accuracy. As a result, interventions are put in place to support pupils and these are contributing to improving rates of progress.
- Senior leaders work with school improvement partners to evaluate the quality of teaching and the standard of work in books. These processes have led to good standards of work and presentation for the vast majority of pupils. However, they have not identified shortcomings in the quality of topic work in science and the humanities.
- Leaders have initiated strategies that have led to significant improvements in standards of reading across the school. Outcomes in the phonics screening check and in key stage 1 reading assessments were well above those seen nationally in 2016.
- The roles of senior and middle leaders are being enhanced. Leaders are undergoing training that is directly improving both the provision and systems to check progress for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their roles in monitoring subject standards are not as enhanced.
- Performance-management arrangements are robust and checked by leaders and governors. Teachers' performance is regularly reviewed against their targets, their teaching and the progress that pupils make.
- The leadership of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective and is supporting current pupils in making good progress. The new special educational needs coordinator is profiling needs more specifically and developing effective plans and partnerships to support progress. She is evaluating the impact of funding more effectively.
- Leaders are tracking the impact of the use of pupil premium funding to improve provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils more effectively. They have a much stronger awareness of key areas of spending and staff are held to account more directly for the progress of these pupils. School tracking information shows that differences in progress and attainment are diminishing.
- The curriculum has a clear academic focus upon reading, writing and mathematics. Breadth is evident in pupils' regular and high-quality opportunities to learn about aspects of nature outdoors in the woods. Topic work in science and the humanities is

less developed. All children and pupils from the early years onwards have regular opportunities to learn to swim in the school's swimming pool.

- Pupils' academic skills are complemented by access to a range of sporting opportunities, including tennis, football and rugby. All pupils take part in a sponsored walk in the local countryside. Pupils' awareness of their local community is developed through initiatives such as the 'farm to fork' project to develop awareness of farming and its contribution to the economy. The school has its own garden, where pupils grow fruit and vegetables.
- While there are strengths in the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, gaps remain. Pupils do visit places of worship and learn about a number of different faiths. They also make cultural visits to the ballet and host visiting theatre groups. The take on environmental responsibility and the school council has set up its own eco group. While pupils are kind and tolerant, the school does not do enough to raise their awareness of a full range of equalities, including different family structures and sexual orientation.
- Teachers and leaders have developed positive relationships with pupils that are evident in the vast majority of lessons. They are responsive to pupils' needs and track the progress of vulnerable pupils carefully. However, systems to capture regularly pupils' views on school life are less developed.
- Funding from the government to promote sport and increase physical activity is being used successfully. Money is being used to support a range of sports, including additional swimming, gymnastics, rugby and a service level agreement with the local authority that provides regular sporting opportunities for all pupils.
- The school receives effective support from a school improvement partner who provides an ongoing review of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has demonstrated a commitment to the community in bringing the first and middle schools together on a single site and in their actions to provide effective nursery provision. They have had the strategic awareness to modify plans to ensure their financial viability.
- Governor committees provide a focus on pupils' progress and curriculum provision. Governors question the progress of particular groups of children and the impact of additional funding, such as the school's use of the pupil premium. Governors use their expertise to check progress in subjects such as mathematics but their work to check standards in science and geography is not as effective.
- Following some concerns over aspects of behaviour in 2016, governors commissioned a review of standards and procedures with the local authority. They have monitored the impact of new procedures closely and evidence reveals that standards have improved.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Training for staff and governors is up

to date. Concerns over pupils' welfare are pursued and recorded and the school works with other agencies to support and promote pupils' well-being. Leaders carry out appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of adults working on site.

- Through its work with the animal charities, local farms and the local environment school, pupils develop an awareness of how to manage risks in this extremely rural community. All pupils receive swimming lessons at the school's on-site swimming pool. Pupils talk clearly about the actions they can take to stay safe online.
- Pupils feel safe in school and believe that bullying is rare and that procedures are in place to support them with concerns that they may have. Leaders consult parents and carers to gather their views on behaviour and safety and the majority of them agree that their children are safe. However, a minority of pupils and their parents do have concerns over aspects of bullying and behaviour.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan effectively and set work that enables the majority of pupils to make good progress. Effective classroom routines encourage pupils to focus upon learning, while regular progress checks enable misconceptions to be addressed swiftly.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively with pupils to develop their reading skills. They model the links between letters and sounds well and encourage pupils to explore links between words and meanings. Pupils read well and develop good comprehension skills. This sustained focus upon reading enabled pupils to achieve outcomes in Year 1 and Year 2 in 2016 that were well above those seen nationally.
- Teachers develop pupils' writing skills by enabling them to write in a range of styles and by encouraging high standards of accuracy with spelling and punctuation. Pupils are able to discuss the effects of particular metaphors and similes and use grammatical features to add depth to their writing.
- Leaders and teachers are improving teaching in mathematics, and this contributed to outcomes in 2016 at key stage 1 that were above those seen nationally. Teachers give pupils considerable opportunities to consolidate their skills, but they do not enable enough pupils to work at greater depth, including the most able and children in the early years.
- Pupils develop their understanding of nature and their confidence and resilience through learning in the woods on the school site. They develop further understanding of plant growth through work in the school's garden and through partnerships with local farmers.
- Despite their learning in the woods, pupils do not explore science and geography in sufficient depth in their topic books.
- The school's commitment to provide on-site swimming lessons by trained instructors for all children and pupils is a real strength. Reception children were seen attentively developing their own skills and providing feedback to their peers. Clear instruction, strong routines and robust safety procedures supported children in making strong progress by the end of the session, with the majority able to swim a length successfully.

- Teachers provide verbal and written feedback in line with the school's policy that helps the majority of pupils to improve. This is particularly effective in English.
- More-refined diagnosis and support is enabling pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make improving progress. New assessment systems are tracking their progress more subtly and enabling teachers to judge the impact of support and spending more effectively.
- Teaching in the early years is developing positively. The work to develop children's phonics skills and independence is a particular strength. Pupils are happy, engaged and curious.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers plan and work effectively with teaching assistants to provide well-targeted support. This is particularly evident in sessions to support reading and understanding but is less developed in mathematics lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Partnerships with the dog's trust, local farmers and community groups help pupils to develop an awareness of their local area and how to manage some of the risks they may face in their rural community.
- Pupils' physical well-being is promoted through encouragement to participate in a wide range of sporting activities, including swimming, rugby, tennis and cricket. Pupils regularly use outdoor spaces, such as the wooded area on the school site. In the week of the inspection, all pupils took part in an extensive sponsored walk in the countryside surrounding the school.
- Pupils demonstrate kindness and understanding in their attitudes towards one another and different groups of people in society. The school is developing pupils' awareness of different faiths, races and cultures, although their work to develop awareness of different types of families and sexual orientation is not as well developed.
- The majority of pupils feel safe and their parents agree. The majority feel that bullying is rare and are confident that adults would address any unacceptable behaviour. Pupils access facilities such as the 'worry box', where they can confidentially post any concerns that will be addressed by teachers and fellow pupils. However, a minority of pupils and parents are less confident in the effectiveness of the school's actions to address bullying, and systems to capture pupils' views have not been implemented consistently enough.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The vast majority of pupils are kind and considerate and focused when it comes to learning. Pupils take a pride in their work that is reflected in the vast majority of books.
- After concerns over aspects of behaviour in 2016, governors and leaders commissioned a review and introduced new procedures. This has led to a significant improvement in behaviour. Pupils work conscientiously and incidences of low-level disruption are rare.

Behaviour systems encourage positive attitudes to learning and strategies to support pupils' behaviour are now much more effective.

- Rates of absence and persistent absence compare favourably with the national picture as pupils value their education and the opportunities the school provides for them.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Current pupils are making very good progress in reading and writing and good progress in mathematics. This is reflected in their progress over time in their books and their learning in lessons.
- As a result of improving planning, better-resourced learning and more-focused teaching, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years is improving so that it is now above average.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standards in the phonics screening check are well above that seen nationally. Standards of reading are good and pupils read with clarity and understanding.
- Outcomes have improved continuously for pupils over the past two years. In 2016, standards of attainment at key stage 1 were significantly above those seen nationally in reading and writing and above those seen nationally in mathematics. Across year groups, pupils regularly work at greater depth in reading and writing. However, this is less so in mathematics because pupils have fewer opportunities to apply their reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Pupils' progress in science and geography is slower than in English and mathematics as pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to explore the curriculum in depth.
- Through their project work in the woods and activities such as swimming lessons for all, pupils develop qualities of resilience, independence and self-confidence.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making improving progress as a result of better identification of their needs and more-effectively tailored support. New assessment systems are providing a clearer insight into the progress that these pupils make.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good and improving progress. Leaders and governors are tracking their progress more assiduously and differences in progress and attainment are clearly diminishing.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not making consistently strong progress as they are not given regular opportunities to apply their learning and work at greater depth, especially in mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the early years with knowledge, skills and abilities that are typically expected for their age. As a result of improving planning and more focused teaching, children make good progress and achieve improving levels of development that are above those seen nationally.

- Teachers and teaching assistants support children in developing effective learning behaviours. In Nursery and Reception, they focus attentively upon phonics tasks and enjoy learning about the links between letters and sounds. Children settle swiftly to tasks. Independence, discovery and understanding are developed outdoors through regular learning sessions in the woods.
- Nursery provision is good and improving. The school successfully meets the welfare requirements for two-year-old children. Since the move to a single site, leaders have worked intensively to enhance the indoor and outdoor learning environment.
- Weekly swimming lessons provide significant value. Children receive expert tuition and concentrate on the development of their skills and that of their peers. Children's confidence in the pool is impressive and their swimming skills develop well.
- Children displayed considerable independence in developing their cooking skills. From helping one another to fasten their aprons to reading recipes and measuring and mixing, children were given opportunities to see the process through, right up to the point where adults took their finished scones to bake in the oven.
- The early years leader carries out regular tracking of children's progress. This enables teachers and teaching assistants to identify quickly any gaps in children's understanding and take action to address them. Parents are encouraged to contribute to the online assessment system and those who do so add to their child's learning records effectively.
- While children develop good phonics understanding, their progress in mathematics is slower, particularly for the most able children. At times, teachers and teaching assistants do not move them on swiftly enough in their learning or tackle misconceptions clearly enough.
- Leaders have worked closely with colleagues from the local authority to improve the learning environment and the quality of planning. This partnership has had a significant impact upon improvements in the early years since the move to the single site. Some of the concerns over learning behaviours that emerged in 2016 have been successfully addressed as a result of this guidance and support.
- Safeguarding practices in the early years are effective and there are no material breaches of statutory welfare requirements as children are safe and well supported.

School details

Unique reference number	122236
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10023927

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	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Murray
Executive Headteacher	Mike Deane-Hall
Telephone number	01668 281470
Website	www.wooler.northumberland.sch.uk
Email address	admin@wooler.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January – 1 February 2012

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the governing body or the curriculum on its website.
- An executive headteacher was appointed to run Wooler First School and Glendale Middle School in September 2014. A federated governing body governs both schools. The first school moved to its current shared site with pupils from Glendale Middle School in September 2015.
- The school provides governor-led nursery provision, including provision for two-year-olds, as part of its early years provision.
- Wooler First School is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below average.

- Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and even fewer speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons, covering all classes in the school. Senior leaders accompanied inspectors on a number of observations.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the assistant headteacher and middle leaders. The lead inspector also met three members of the governing body, including the acting chair. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the school's improvement partner and met the local authority primary schools' commissioner.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils in meetings and in lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors talked to parents as they dropped their children off at school on day two of the inspection.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons, lunchtimes and playtimes.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading as part of their phonics work.
- Inspectors examined the quality of work in a wide range of books. They discussed pupils' work and their learning with them in lessons.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and considered documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, curriculum plans and information relating to pupil achievement and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account 12 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and seven free-text responses.

Inspection team

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