

Amble First School

Edwin Street, Amble, Morpeth, Northumberland NE65 0EF

Inspection dates

4–6 July 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
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 is variable across year groups and this contributes to unevenness in pupils' progress in key stages 1 and 2.
- Although improving, standards in mathematics remain more variable and pupils are not given consistent opportunities to work in greater depth across all year groups.
- The quality of pupils' writing is mixed across year groups, particularly for boys, whose progress can be hampered by inaccuracies and weaker standards of presentation.
- Leaders and governors have not done enough to improve rates of attendance for all pupils and for key groups of pupils. Absence rates have been too high for too long. As a result, behaviour requires improvement.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is variable and current systems to review their progress do not adequately reflect the views of parents and pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has a clear focus on many areas for improvement. She has brought stability over a period of staffing change and built leadership capacity while maintaining a strong focus on improvement.
- The headteacher has worked closely with her team and school improvement partners to take important steps to improve the quality of teaching.
- Effective planning, teaching and assessment enable pupils to make good progress in the early years.
- Pupils are polite, happy and well behaved and value the strong care and support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Governors are committed to the school's success and are monitoring pupils' progress with increasing rigour. They work with the headteacher to maintain a continual focus on safeguarding and pupil welfare.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by:
 - building upon recent initiatives to increase the proportions of pupils working at greater depth
 - further developing strategies in mathematics to enable pupils to apply problem-solving skills and reasoning across all year groups
 - improving the quality of boys' writing by maintaining a stronger focus on their spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - tracking the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities more closely and including the views of parents and pupils more clearly
 - providing increasing opportunities for teachers to learn from the most effective practice in the school so that recent improvements can be securely implemented.
- Improve rates of attendance, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and girls, by:
 - ensuring that leaders and governors monitor attendance more regularly and closely
 - intervening more rapidly to address attendance issues
 - working more closely with parents to overcome any barriers to attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher has maintained stability over a period of staffing change and worked with her team to lead improvements that have addressed the dip in performance at key stage 1 in 2016. However, actions to improve attendance and increase opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth across all year groups have not been as effective.
- Leaders and governors have not done enough to track and improve rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and girls. More intensive action since January, including improved links with the educational welfare officer, is leading to improvement but rates of absence have remained too high for too long.
- The headteacher has worked effectively with her school improvement partner to address a number of areas for improvement. A more rigorous mathematics scheme is contributing to standards that are more consistent and increasing challenge across year groups. Teachers' actions to increase opportunities for pupils to work at greater depth have led to increasing proportions doing so in Year 2, although this is not yet consistent across all year groups.
- The headteacher has responded to a degree of staffing turbulence in recent years by developing the leadership roles of other colleagues. This is leading to stronger subject leadership and better provision in the early years. The headteacher has also challenged weaker teaching and made appointments that are leading to improving quality of teaching, although these improvements are not fully embedded.
- While a range of external partnerships is in place to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders and governors do not track the impact of provision and funding closely enough. Individual education plans that outline provision for teachers and parents do not reflect the views of parents or pupils.
- Effective processes are in place to support the development of newly qualified teachers. Leaders review the performance of other colleagues but staffing changes have impacted upon the regularity of these reviews.
- Leaders are using new assessment tracking systems to provide teachers, leaders and governors with termly reviews of pupils' progress. Increasing moderation is contributing to a more accurate awareness of standards, although work to increase teachers' awareness of greater depth remains at an early stage.
- Leaders ensure that a broad and balanced curriculum, complemented by additional experiences and a cohesive assembly programme, enhances pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies promote pupils' sense of tolerance and their wider social awareness. Pupils develop social responsibility through charity and fund-raising activities, while their social skills and resilience are promoted through a range of experiences, including regular residential trips.
- Leaders and governors have largely used additional pupil premium funding to provide additional support for eligible pupils on specific support programmes. Over time, this has contributed to good rates of progress, although a smaller proportion of disadvantaged pupils reached greater depth in 2016. The pupil premium plan has not

addressed the need to reduce absence, even though this has been in the highest 10% for these pupils for three consecutive years.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a range of appropriate experience and are committed to the success of the school. They are aware of the school's strengths and key areas for improvement. They have monitored new approaches to teaching in mathematics and worked with leaders to check the quality of work in books.
- Governors have reviewed the impact of additional funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium on their academic performance. The monitoring of provision and progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has not been as focused this academic year.
- Governors have not monitored the impact of leaders' actions to improve attendance overall and for key groups of pupils closely enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors take their responsibilities for pupils' welfare seriously and carry out an annual audit of safeguarding practices. They pursue concerns over pupils' welfare carefully. Leaders carry out appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of adults working on site. Safeguarding training is up to date and effective personal, social and health education supports pupils' safety and welfare.
- Pupils feel safe in school and their parents agree. Parents expressed considerable appreciation for the care and welfare that teachers provide. Pupils believe that bullying is extremely rare and that staff act decisively on the rare occasions bullying does occur. Pupils talk clearly about the actions they can take to stay safe online and how to avoid the threats posed by strangers.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies between classes and contributes to varying rates of progress across subjects and for different groups of pupils.
- Although leaders are introducing new schemes of work and heightened training to improve teaching in mathematics, these changes have not yet led to consistently effective practice across the school. Where teaching is most effective, teachers are developing pupils' reasoning and providing work that is suitably pitched to pupils' abilities. However, on other occasions, teaching does not develop secure mathematical understanding and work does not challenge pupils as thoroughly, as they are given fewer opportunities to work at greater depth. As a result, progress remains uneven.
- Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to develop their handwriting, spelling and accuracy through a range of writing tasks. They often provide opportunities for pupils to orally rehearse their responses before writing their thoughts on paper. Girls respond particularly well to these strategies and demonstrate increasing stamina and confidence in their writing as a result. However, teaching and assessment leads to less consistent progress for many of the boys for whom support and feedback has less of an impact

on the accuracy and quality of their writing.

- Teachers and teaching assistants effectively model sounds and develop pupils' abilities to recognise the links between letters and sounds. They encourage pupils to read expressively and with enthusiasm. This is contributing to improving outcomes in the phonics screening check in 2017. Teachers and teaching assistants are successfully developing pupils' comprehension and inference and deduction skills.
- Teaching in science and topic work, as reflected in their books, provides pupils with opportunities to purposefully explore wider historical themes, such as 'The Victorians' or aspects of geography and culture through a project on Mexico.
- The majority of teachers provide feedback in line with the school's policy, although variance remains in how this feedback supports progress.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities does not consistently enable these pupils to make good progress. While pupils benefit from interventions and small-group work, they are not given sufficient capacity to work independently and the impact of support is not tracked closely enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Teachers are continually mindful of pupils' welfare and maintain a safe and supportive environment. Pupils value their learning and the kindness of their teachers and other adults on site.
- Parents are happy with the support their children receive. One parent described how 'I never worry about them; they are well cared for and are very happy in their school.'
- Pupils develop a sense of social responsibility through a range of charity work and recycling activities. Pupils are involved with their local communities in singing to elderly residents and at local churches over the Christmas period. Pupils' physical welfare is promoted through access to a range of sports, including swimming, football and yoga. Teachers also organise a range of sports and activities to develop physical welfare and activity on the school site.
- Pupils develop a continual awareness of welfare through an effective personal, social and health education programme that encourages awareness of hygiene, diet, exercise and relationships in age-appropriate ways.
- Pupils believe that bullying is rare and they are confident that if it did occur, teachers and other adults would effectively address their concerns.
- Pupils are able to discuss the actions that the school has taken to help them keep safe. They have a good awareness of how to keep safe online and how to avoid the threats posed by strangers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is largely because overall rates of absence have been above those seen nationally for a three-year period. In addition,

rates of absence for disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and girls have been in the highest 10% nationally for two years. While there are signs of improvement, leaders' actions to secure improvement have not had sufficient impact and absence rates remain too high.

- Many other aspects of pupils' behaviour are good. Pupils are kind and polite to one another. They routinely hold doors open for one another and adults. They respond to teacher requests promptly and the vast majority work productively and positively in class.
- Pupils are typically positive and attentive in their learning. They engage with their work and low-level disruption is rare. Teachers encourage positive attitudes to learning and the rare instances of misbehaviour are effectively addressed. However, on occasions, pupils' attention in lessons wanes, particularly that of boys, when the work they are given is not sufficiently challenging or engaging for them.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes require improvement because pupils do not make strong progress across a range of subjects and differences exist between year groups and different groups of pupils.
- In 2016, pupils' progress and attainment at key stage 1 were below results seen nationally in writing and mathematics and well below figures seen nationally for pupils working at greater depth in all areas. Progress was weakest for middle-ability pupils, who formed the majority of the cohort.
- Pupils' current progress in Year 2 is stronger and the proportions of pupils who are anticipated to achieve expected standards and greater depth show a marked increase. However, boys' writing remains weaker, with none anticipated to achieve greater depth.
- Standards of writing are variable across the school. Through an extensive review of books, there were signs that many girls were making improving progress and developing writing stamina as they progressed through the school. However, in many cases, boys' writing is more mixed. They do not build rapidly upon their positive start from Reception class in Year 1 and errors of paragraphing and punctuation undermine the quality of their work up into Year 4.
- New schemes of work and more focused training are leading to improvements in pupils' progress in mathematics, where outcomes over time have been more variable. Pupils are now receiving increasing opportunities to develop their fluency in key operations through regular practise and assessment. In classes such as Year 3, there was evidence of pupils receiving increasing opportunities to solve problems and apply mathematical reasoning in order to work at greater depth. However, this was not evident across all classes, as new developments are not securely embedded.
- Pupils' current progress in reading is improving and outcomes in the 2017 phonics screening check show a marked increase, with over 80% achieving the required standard. Pupils typically achieve good outcomes in reading and pupils heard reading did so with clarity and expression.
- Historically, disadvantaged pupils have made good progress, although their outcomes

in 2016 were weaker than other pupils nationally. They are currently making better progress, particularly at key stage 2, although their progress in writing at key stage 1 is weaker.

- The wider progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is mixed. Individual case studies show signs of good progress and effective support but the overall picture is more variable, with pupils' progress weaker in writing and mathematics in particular year groups.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, made good progress in mathematics in 2016. Work in books and in class shows that they are continuing to make good progress in mathematics, although standards of writing continue to show more variance, particularly for more-able boys.
- Outcomes in Reception class are good and improving and, in 2016, the proportion achieving a good level of development was above that seen nationally. While the proportion achieving a good level of development in 2017 is likely to show a slight decrease, this still represents good progress from their starting points.

Early years provision

Good

- Outcomes in the early years have shown consistent improvement over the past three years. As a result of thorough planning and effective teaching, children make good progress and achieve levels of development in line with those seen nationally.
- Links with the on-site community Nursery are strong and this supports children in making a smooth transition to Reception. The early years leader oversees both settings and shares planning and assessment to provide continuity and help children to make good progress. Good links with two other Nursery providers also support effective transition.
- Teachers and teaching assistants set work that captures children's interest and supports progress. A Reception teacher modelled expressive reading, and this encouraged children to read aloud with expression and enthusiasm. Children effectively used their phonics strategies to segment words and then blend them in order to read aloud with clarity.
- Teaching assistants work well with children to develop their reading and comprehension skills in readiness for their transition to Year 1. A small group of children effectively explored an extract from a text and could explain the thoughts and feelings of characters.
- In their books and journals, children show increasing confidence in their letter formation and letter and word spacing. Some children are less confident when writing independently and become less secure in their letter formations and spellings.
- In addition to teacher-led activities, children have many opportunities to engage in creative and imaginative activities that stimulate their interest and curiosity. They enjoy activities such as counting shells and comparing shells of different sizes and shapes.
- Teachers monitor children's progress closely and record this accurately. Children's work and progress are captured in books, folders and through an online tracking system. External moderation confirms that teachers have an accurate view of standards. These collective records confirm that children make good progress from their starting points.

Teachers have an accurate picture of children's abilities and learning needs and therefore teaching is effective and results in good progress.

- Safeguarding practices in the early years are effective. There are no breaches in statutory welfare requirements. Children are safe, well cared for and supported.

School details

Unique reference number	122174
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10032051

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	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	114
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Baxter
Headteacher	Joyce Jenkins
Telephone number	01665 710388
Website	www.amble.firstschool.org.uk/
Email address	admin@amblefirst.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 December 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Amble First School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is slightly above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed a wide range of lessons, covering all classes in the school. The headteacher accompanied the lead inspector on a number of observations.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and a wider group of staff. The inspector also met six members of the governing body, including the chair. He met a group of pupils at lunchtime on day 1 of the inspection. The inspector talked by telephone to the local authority school improvement partner and met the local authority primary school commissioner.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during lessons and at lunchtime.
- The inspector listened to pupils reading and talked to them about their reading.
- The inspector extensively examined the quality of work in a wide range of books. He discussed pupils' work and their learning with them in lessons.
- The inspector 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 pupils' achievement and safeguarding.
- The inspector took into account 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and eight free-text responses. He also took into account eight responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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