

Central Primary School

Milburn Road, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 0AX

Inspection dates

6–7 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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not ensured that pupils make good or better progress consistently in reading and mathematics, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able in key stage 2.
- Middle leaders, although keen, do not measure the impact of their actions robustly.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of their pupils. They do not use assessments well to plan challenging work.
- The assessment information in the school's tracking system is not always accurate. Some assessments are inflated. These give a false impression of the progress made by pupils.
- Not enough children reach a good level of development by the end of the early years. There is no trend of continuous improvement.
- Leaders have struggled to implement consistent systems and procedures on both sites. Consequently, leaders do not access reliable information by which to assess the school's progress.
- Pupils in key stage 2 are unhappy with the name-calling that occurs during breaktimes.
- Despite recent improvements, pupils do not attend school often enough and too many are persistently absent. Holidays taken in term time are slowing pupils' progress.
- Staff are not clear about the difference between pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are of low ability.
- Governors do not hold senior leaders to account with sufficient rigour, especially in relation to the use of the government's additional funding for disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive principal and head of school have taken some effective actions to improve teaching and learning since taking up their posts in 2016.
- Middle leaders are undertaking a range of appropriate developmental qualifications.
- Pupils' behaviour is improving. Most pupils are kind, courteous, respectful and happy to attend.
- Teaching assistants plan, deliver and assess intervention activities well. They are one of the school's strengths.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment in all key stages, and consequently pupils' progress, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of their pupils
 - planning challenging work, which stretches pupils to do their very best, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able throughout the school and boys in the early years
 - making sure that the assessments in the school's tracking system are accurate and used well by all teachers to inform pupils' next steps in learning
 - developing a love of reading among the pupils
 - instilling in pupils a sound and rapid recall of basic number facts
 - providing further staff training on the identification of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that governors gain the skills they need to challenge senior leaders robustly, especially in relation to pupils' assessment information
 - leaders provide comparative data to governors so they can judge the impact of improvement actions knowledgeably
 - developing middle leadership further so that the quality and impact of the curriculum on offer improves
 - measuring effectively the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - establishing robust whole-school systems and procedures, especially in relation to recording incidents of inappropriate behaviour.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and well-being of pupils by:
 - educating pupils about the harmful effects of name-calling
 - increasing the proportion of pupils who attend every day
 - decreasing the number of pupils who are persistently absent and take holidays in term time.

External reviews of the school's use of pupil premium funding and 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 executive principal and the head of school took up post at the beginning of the summer term 2016. They evaluated most aspects of the school's effectiveness as requiring improvement immediately. The senior leaders then formed and implemented plans to raise the standards reached by pupils, especially those in key stage 2, by improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment rapidly. Despite their efforts, pupils still do not make good progress to reach the standards of which they are capable, especially the disadvantaged and most-able pupils.
- Senior leaders have overhauled many of the school's systems and procedures since taking up post. However, the new systems are not embedded fully on both sites. For example, one set of records shows one incident of homophobic name-calling during the 2016–17 academic year and a second set of records shows three incidents during the same period.
- Leaders do not spend the government's additional funding for disadvantaged pupils well. Disadvantaged pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable, especially in reading.
- Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants are using a new online tool to track the attainment and progress made by pupils. Some of the assessment information entered into the online tracking tool is not accurate. Consequently, leaders sometimes have an inflated view of the progress being made by pupils.
- Subject leadership is not well established. Leaders have written improvement plans for the subjects that they lead. These plans show the actions that have been taken to develop their subjects. However, subject leaders have not evaluated the effect of their actions on the progress made and standards reached by pupils. Senior leaders have identified the need to develop subject leadership further. As a result, some subject leaders are undertaking the National College for Teaching and Leadership's national professional qualification for middle leadership (NPQML).
- The coordinator for special educational needs (SENCo) supports individual pupils proactively by seeking additional provision from a wide variety of external agencies. However, she and other leaders show a lack of clarity about the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In addition, staff are unclear about the differences between a pupil who has special educational needs and/or disabilities and a pupil who has low prior attainment.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge is developed well through collective worship, visits and visitors. The school's core values of partnership, responsibility, excellence and opportunity are exemplified when teachers award stars to pupils who have 'gone for gold'. Teachers tell the assembled pupils, parents and staff exactly why each star has been awarded. Pupils delight in this success and visibly grow in stature when their names are announced.
- Pupils in all key stages understand right, wrong and the rule of law. They have a strong knowledge of each other's individual differences. For example, during the inspection, a Year 1 child compared her skin tone to that of other pupils in her group.

After taking time to reflect and think she said, 'We are all different in one way, but all the same in other ways.'

- Senior leaders have developed the systems and procedures to appraise staff thoroughly. Only effective practice is rewarded. Teachers do not make progress up the school's pay scale as a matter of course.
- Teaching assistants have attended high-quality training and now plan, deliver and assess intervention programmes well. As a result, they feel empowered and valued. Teaching assistants are a strength of the school.
- The physical education and sport funding for primary schools is spent well. As a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy a wide variety of competitive school sports and learn how to lead an active and healthy lifestyle. Classes vie with each other to be awarded the golden boot in celebration assembly every Friday. Leaders award the golden boot to the class that has run the most golden miles during the week.
- The school's improvement partner has an inflated view of the progress that pupils make over time as seen in their workbooks, especially in key stage 2. The local authority has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness now. Northumberland's commissioner for early years and primary education identified green shoots of recovery accurately and understands the areas that continue to require improvement. Officers from the local authority have provided effective support to improve the early years environment.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is beginning to find its feet following reconstitution. Members oversee the two primary schools in the Ashington Learning Partnership. They are seeking to strengthen their membership through recruiting new governors with specific skills and experience, for example in health and social care.
- The school improvement group (SIG) of governors does not challenge and support senior leaders with sufficient rigour. Many of the questions asked by governors during meetings are to clarify information rather than to challenge leaders.
- Members of the SIG do not receive sufficient information from the executive principal about the numbers and types of behavioural incidents that occur on the two sites. They are unable to judge whether pupils' behaviour is improving rapidly because they have not stipulated that this data is included in the executive principal's regular reports to the board.
- Governors have begun to carry out monitoring visits to check on the work of the school. Although in its infancy, this system is beginning to pay dividends. For example, the SIG has received some information about the use and impact of pupil premium funding, following a monitoring visit.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's record of recruitment checks is compliant with requirements. Leaders ensure that any gaps in applicants' employment histories are thoroughly investigated at

interview.

- The two school sites are safe and secure with accessible exits in case of emergency.
- There is a culture of safeguarding throughout the school. All staff attend safeguarding and child protection training at the beginning of each academic year. Leaders provide updates when necessary as the year progresses. Referrals in respect of suspected female genital mutilation and children missing from education are made in a timely manner.
- The designated safeguarding leader (DSL) is knowledgeable and proactive. Safeguarding referrals are made quickly and appropriately. It is difficult for the DSL to ensure that the paper-based records are kept up to date across both sites.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- It is difficult for teachers to plan work at exactly the right level for their pupils because some of the information about what pupils know and can do is inaccurate. This aspect of their work is improving, but some inconsistencies remain. For example, the school's data tracking system shows that there is a sizeable disparity between the standards achieved by children on exit from the school's Nursery class and their standards on entry to the Reception class.
- There has been a considerable turnover in teachers in key stage 2; five have left during the current academic year. A minority of parents expressed some concerns about the number of teachers that their children have had in upper school classes this year. Leaders have ensured a more stable staffing complement in key stage 2 from September 2017.
- Teaching has not ensured that pupils in key stage 2 have rapid recall of multiplication facts. This hinders their ability to solve mathematical problems.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of their pupils, especially in key stage 2. They do not plan work that engages their pupils fully and challenges them routinely to reach the very highest standards.
- Phonics is taught well in the lower school. Most pupils achieve the required standard in Year 1 and the vast majority achieve this by the end of Year 2. However, having developed the ability to decode unfamiliar words, pupils do not then go on to develop reading comprehension skills as fast as they should. They are unable to infer and deduce hidden, non-literal meanings in texts. Leaders and teachers have not engendered a love of reading in their pupils.
- Teaching in key stage 1 is strong and enables pupils to make good progress from their individual starting points. For example, key stage 1 teachers ask insightful questions of their pupils and allow sufficient time for them to give reasoned answers.
- Teaching assistants appreciate the way in which leaders have developed their roles and responsibilities. They have been trained to plan and deliver intervention programmes that are aimed at helping pupils to catch up with their peers quickly. These intervention programmes are beginning to bear fruit.
- In English, the teaching of writing is stronger than reading. This has been a focus of teachers' work since the previous inspection.

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 know what constitutes bullying and can explain verbal, physical and online bullying. They know how to stay safe online and have been taught not to give out any personal information. Pupils are confident that the adults in school will deal effectively with incidents of bullying that are reported to them.
- Pupils want to learn. They understand the importance of education for their lives in the future. However, the most able pupils are too content to sit back when they have finished their allotted tasks. They do not seek out further challenges.
- Leaders provide well for pupils' physical health. Physical education and sports are strong aspects of the school's work. Pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and are inspired by the school's golden mile challenge.
- Leaders have made appropriate provision for pupils' mental health through the appointment of a well-being officer. Although a recent initiative, disadvantaged pupils are benefiting from her work and expertise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils understand how to behave well. However, pupils and some of their parents are unhappy about the number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour in school, especially incidents of name-calling at breaktimes in key stage 2.
- Although pupils' attendance has improved since the new leadership team took up post, it has still not reached the national average for primary schools. In addition, the number of pupils who are persistently absent remains too high. Too many parents are taking their children out of school for holidays in term time.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision. They make strong progress because of the targeted and individualised support that they access. Communication between the providers and the school is strong. Leaders provided a passport of information when the pupils were first admitted. The alternative providers send progress reports to the school at regular intervals.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils are not making good progress in reading and mathematics in key stage 2, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able. The proportion of pupils achieving age-related expectations in Years 4, 5 and 6 is lower now than it was at their starting points.
- Over time, pupils at the end of key stage 1 have reached above-average standards in

reading, writing and mathematics. However, the standards reached by Year 2 pupils in those subjects this year have dropped. An in-depth check on their workbooks, undertaken by inspectors with senior leaders, shows that pupils continue to make good progress from their individual starting points. This is true in phonics as well as in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is much stronger in key stage 1 than in key stage 2.

- Writing is a strength throughout the school. A greater proportion of pupils in both key stages 1 and 2 are reaching age-related expectations in writing now than they did at the end of the early years and key stage 1 respectively.
- However, the most able pupils are not making sufficient progress in reading and mathematics across the school. They are not challenged to excel effectively.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in key stage 1. Their progress wanes in key stage 2.
- The very small number of pupils who attend alternative provision are making good progress academically, socially and emotionally.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Despite a strong start in the two-year-old provision and Nursery classes, the gains made in children's learning and development by the age of four are not capitalised on fully during the Reception Year. Teaching for this age group lacks challenge because adults do not have high enough expectations of what children can achieve, especially in their reading, writing and number work.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the age of five has remained fairly static over the last four years. While there have been small gains or losses from year to year, approximately one third of children arrive in Year 1, each year, unprepared for the demands of more formal schooling.
- The adults in Reception do not expect enough of the children. Teachers do not build consistently on what children already know, understand and can do. Some repetition of learning that has already been mastered leads to slower progress. For example, children in Reception were observed being challenged to make a sea creature five cubes long despite having secured this number knowledge in Nursery.
- Phonics teaching is stronger than that for writing or mathematics. Children enjoy experimenting with sounds from an early age. By the end of Nursery, children already recognise some individual letters and the sounds that they represent. Targeted teaching continues each day throughout Reception. Adults read with children frequently, both in school and at home. Staff have been less successful in promoting children's writing and spelling, especially among boys.
- Leaders are clear in their priorities for securing a better quality of teaching, but their evaluation of the initiatives they undertake lacks focus. Systems for recording children's achievements and evaluating learning and progress require development. Adults' comments too often describe the activities that children have undertaken rather than the learning that was exhibited. This makes it difficult for leaders to pinpoint children's

progress precisely.

- Children make safe choices due to effective adult care. Expectations of behaviour are established quickly, from the two-year-old provision upwards. Across the early years, warm relationships are developed, so that children always have someone special to turn to when they feel anxious, upset or unsure. Adults ensure that children are happy, safe and secure.
- Leaders have been successful in engaging more parents in their children's learning. A move to electronic recording of children's achievements has made it easier for parents to contribute photographs and captions to their child's 'learning journey'. Initiatives, such as taking pictures home, have supported parents to promote children's speech and communication well.
- Leaders have a strong determination to support the needs of their community through the 'Little Learners' provision for funded two-year olds. Staff here are highly responsive to children's learning and care needs. As a result, children grow in confidence and their speech, language and physical development comes on in leaps and bounds. A high proportion of these children are moving into the school Nursery with skills and understanding that are more typical for their age.
- Teaching in the Nursery picks up on children's improved starting points and moves children's learning forward quickly. For example, in mathematics, children were observed confidently counting dots and linking this to numerals. Some of the most able nursery children were encouraged to think about whether different objects and pictures represented the same or different numerals. These children enjoyed having to think hard about their counting and sense of number.
- Children are provided with many engaging and exciting opportunities to learn and explore. Two-year olds enjoyed washing their wheeled toys to develop their grip and coordination. Nursery children showed great concentration and perseverance when mixing different paints. Reception children were eager to investigate the features of a real mackerel. When children's interest is piqued, learning and progress is stronger.

School details

Unique reference number	131021
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10023922

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	Foundation
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	794
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leigh Elliott
Executive Principal	Andrew Roberts
Telephone number	01670 810570
Website	http://centralprimary.co.uk/
Email address	cps@alptrust.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 September 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is much larger than an average-sized primary school.
- Five key stage 2 teachers have left the school during the current academic year.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is more than twice the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and who are receiving support is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school, which was previously a first school, became a primary school on 1

September 2015. The first Year 6 cohort attended during the 2015–16 academic year.

- The school met the government's minimum floor standards for primary schools in 2016.
- The school is part of the Ashington Learning Partnership Trust, which is a federation of two schools. The second school in the federation is Bothal Primary School. The executive principal of Central Primary School is also the executive headteacher of Bothal Primary School. The governing body oversees both schools. The school improvement group of governors has delegated responsibility to challenge and support the leaders in Central Primary School.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 attend the upper school site on Third Avenue in Ashington. The two-year olds, Nursery children, Reception children and Years 1 and 2 attend the lower school site in Milburn Road.
- One hundred and two children attend full-time provision in the Reception classes. There are 98 children who attend Nursery on a part-time basis. There are 84 two-year olds on roll.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Choysez and Get U Started Training.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons across a wide range of subjects in all year groups on both of the school sites. Observations of lessons were carried out jointly with the executive principal and the head of school on the first day of the inspection.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their workbooks to find out more about how well they are learning. Two inspectors read with pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Formal meetings were held with three groups of key stage 2 pupils and one group of key stage 1 pupils. The inspectors noted the responses of 46 pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Additional meetings were held with senior, middle and subject leaders, governors, including the chair of governors, and members of the school improvement group. The lead inspector also talked to the school's improvement partner and Northumberland local authority's commissioner for early years and primary education.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school more broadly and looked at a range of documentation. This included policies and improvement plans relating to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, curriculum, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector, executive principal and head of school scrutinised pupils' assessment information on the first day of the inspection. Another inspector scrutinised the assessment information relating to children in the early years on the second day of the inspection.
- One of the inspectors met with parents dropping their children off at school on the second morning of the inspection. The inspectors took account of the 14 parental free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, together with a letter from a parent received during the inspection.
- The 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff were taken into account. The lead inspector held a discussion with a group of teaching assistants.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the two alternative providers used by the school.

Inspection team

Belita Scott, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lee Owston	Her Majesty's Inspector
Deborah Ashcroft	Ofsted Inspector
Heather Mensah	Ofsted Inspector
Sylvia Anne Humble	Ofsted Inspector

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