

Bothal Primary School

Wansbeck Road, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 8HZ

Inspection dates

24–25 April 2018

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders' determination to eradicate anything that is second best and their continuing ambition to eliminate underperformance underpin robust and effective actions to ensure continuing improvement.
- Under the experienced leadership of the executive principal and the skilled and tenacious head of school, the desire to provide the best possible teaching, outcomes and experiences for all pupils is tangible.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. Current pupils are making strong progress from their individual starting points.
- Children in the early years make a flying start to their learning. They make good progress to reach standards that are broadly average by the time they leave the Reception class.
- As a result of consistently good teaching, pupils learn quickly and are beginning to apply their skills across all subjects. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at supporting pupils' progress in learning.
- Teachers' continuing professional development is supported very well through training and in-school support from highly skilled coaches.
- Teachers generally match work accurately to pupils' abilities, but occasionally work can lack challenge, especially for the most able pupils.
- Leaders' actions to improve the teaching of reading and mathematics are taking effect and current pupils' achievement is good. However, further work is needed to develop pupils' inference and deduction skills in reading and reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics.
- Leaders' effective use of the pupil premium funding has resulted in the difference between the achievement of current disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school and nationally diminishing. Differences are not yet eliminated.
- The leadership of the well-planned curriculum ensures that pupils are enthusiastic and engaged in their learning. The school's use of specialist teachers and its delivery of a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) curriculum is a key strength of provision.
- The school's teaching and assessment of pupils' skills in creative subjects and in subjects other than English and mathematics are not fully developed and implemented.
- The behaviour of pupils is good and is rooted in the respect and care they have for each other. Pupils are polite and display good manners.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. Their aspirations are based on a sound understanding of the life skills they need to secure a successful future.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management, by:
 - continuing to diminish the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in school and nationally who have similar starting points
 - consolidating and embedding strategies to ensure that age-related, subject-specific skills in creative and foundation subjects are effectively taught and assessed in every year group.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, by:
 - ensuring that work consistently challenges pupils' thinking and stretches their understanding, especially for the most able pupils
 - ensuring that pupils' skills of inference and deduction allow them to achieve highly in reading
 - making sure pupils have frequent opportunities to use their improving number skills in reasoning and problem-solving activities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The experienced and determined executive principal has been unwavering in his mission to secure an excellent standard of education for pupils in this school. He has worked in tandem with the talented and dedicated head of school, whose attention to detail and meticulous approach have been key. The highly skilled governing body, school leaders and the wider school community provide a formidable team, constantly striving to ensure that a continual cycle of improvement is the norm.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of what the school does well, and what it needs to do to be even more successful. Procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of the school's performance are incisive, robust and detailed. Teachers are clear about the key aspects of teaching and learning which enable pupils to make secure and rapid progress. All teachers are assessed against these key criteria so that leaders hold a comprehensive overview of their strengths and weaknesses, including in the teaching of each subject.
- Leaders hold an extremely detailed online improvement plan as a result of the robust and detailed evaluation of provision. All leaders, including governors, contribute to its content and implementation. Governors are assigned to key improvement actions, and progress is thoroughly analysed to ensure that pupils have the best possible opportunity to succeed and fulfil their potential.
- As a result of improvements to the quality of teaching, current pupils are now making strong progress in their learning, with a large majority in every year group on track to reach standards expected for their age by the end of the school year. The school has worked hard to address disappointing outcomes for pupils shown in data from statutory assessments in reading and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Pupils are becoming skilled in their use of inference and deduction in reading tasks, as shown by the school's tracking data. Many pupils are able to use their skills in number to reason and solve problems in mathematics, but this remains inconsistent across school.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, and delivered in both a thematic approach and in subject-specific lessons. Excellent use is made of the outdoor learning environment. Pupils from Years 4 and 5 thoroughly enjoyed examining creatures from the school pond such as caddis fly larvae, pond skaters and smooth newts. Extra-curricular clubs support pupils' learning well, such as engineering for families, coding, upcycling and numerous sports clubs.
- Based on an analysis of the employment demographic of its local area, the school has invested in and promotes a STEM approach for its older pupils. It is based around key life skills such as team working, self-motivation, communication and resilience. High-quality facilities, resources and teacher knowledge ensure that pupils benefit from learning opportunities that raise aspiration and eliminate gender stereotypes. Partnership working with local engineering businesses and manufacturing firms and links to universities provide pupils with unique experiences and learning opportunities that prepare them well for their next step in education.
- Although the school's curriculum is broad and balanced and all areas are covered, it does not yet ensure that subject-specific skills are planned and taught effectively and

progressively across all year groups. The school is currently working on strategies that will allow the teachers to accurately assess these skills and track pupils' progress in all areas of the curriculum.

- Leaders are managing pupil premium spending effectively to provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils. This support is regularly evaluated for its impact on pupils' learning, and amended or changed as a result. The positive impact of this support is seen through the improving progress made by current disadvantaged pupils across the school. However, their achievement still lags behind that of other pupils in the school and nationally.
- The good leadership of the special educational needs coordinator has resulted in effective provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The leader has detailed knowledge of all pupils receiving additional support. Consequently, their good progress, often in small steps, is tracked accurately. Support programmes such as for speech and language, number and phonics are reviewed and evaluated for their impact on pupils' learning. Consequently, the special educational needs funding is used effectively by leaders.
- The physical education and sports funding for schools is being used well. The sports leader has a clear understanding of the strengths in improving pupils' health and well-being through involvement in exercise and sport. Over the last two years, almost all pupils have attended non-competitive sports events. The school offers 41 different sports clubs, often at the request of pupils, which 90% of pupils attend. Clubs include curling, wave boards and trampolining.
- The school receives targeted challenge and support from the local authority representative which have been very effective in driving forward improvements.

Governance of the school

- The school benefits from a highly skilled, dedicated and proactive governing body. Governors describe a 'togetherness' that encapsulates their shared ambition to provide the best possible opportunities for pupils. Governors make it their business to know about the work of the school and have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have ensured, along with the executive principal, head of school and senior leaders, that the school's priorities are intrinsically embedded in the performance management of all adults.
- Governors participate in monitoring activities alongside senior leaders, such as meeting with their link subject leader and making short visits to classes. Governors bring a range of appropriate professional skills and experience to the school that enhance their impact on school improvement. They take responsibility for accessing training and further developing their own skills. Governors' regular school improvement group meetings allow them to question school leaders and hold them to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as for pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. They are a real strength of the school. They go way beyond simple compliance with requirements. The long-established culture of keeping pupils safe remains very evident. Leaders ensure that a culture of safeguarding is embedded among all staff and they leave no stone unturned

in their duty to keep pupils safe. Monthly meetings are held to review the effectiveness of the school's procedures to ensure that pupils are safe. The curriculum supports pupils well in maintaining their own safety including being safe online.

- Policies, procedures and records are of extremely high quality. Staff training is thorough and up to date, including training to ensure that pupils are kept safe from the risk of extremism and online dangers. Registers of staff training are completed diligently. Effective use is made of an external consultant to audit and test school procedures. Staff have access to well-written policies and guidance and, as a result, have a very secure understanding of their individual responsibilities for safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have been successful in their continual drive to improve the quality of teaching. The impact of teaching on learning, including in reading, writing and mathematics, is reflected in the accelerating rates of progress current pupils now make in each year group. This has not always been the case, and the school has worked hard to address the issues from the key stage 2 statutory assessments in which pupils' progress in reading and mathematics did not match that in writing.
- Lessons are usually lively and interesting, capturing pupils' imagination. For example, in Year 5 a science lesson allowed pupils to test the extent to which chemicals in a liquid allowed or prevented the passage of light, using a ray box and a data logger. Pupils enthusiastically and knowledgeably discussed ideas around how they measured lux.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to structure learning effectively. For example, most pupils in Year 6 were able to find missing co-ordinates in shape problems, while others successfully identified missing angles at the intersection of two lines. In Year 4, pupils could explain whether 'inside' was or was not a preposition.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and stick closely to the school's behaviour policy. Relationships are strong, resulting in pupils having confidence to give answers, as they are not afraid to make a mistake. Pupils are consistently encouraged to justify and give their evidence for their responses in reading as initiatives to develop skills of inference and deduction take root. Pupils' positive attitudes in lessons support their learning very well.
- Work is usually pitched well, according to pupils' abilities, and teachers are skilled at adapting and changing plans based on ongoing daily assessments of how well pupils grasp learning. On some occasions, work does not provide sufficient challenge, especially for most-able and most-able disadvantaged pupils.
- In mathematics, basic skills of number and mental calculation are taught daily and consolidated regularly. For example, Year 3 pupils were able to find fractions of numbers such as one quarter of 32. Pupils are becoming increasingly adept in their use of mathematical reasoning to solve problems, but this approach is not yet consistently offered across all year groups.
- As a result of the rigorous and systematic teaching of phonics, children are getting off to a fast start in their reading. Adults are skilled in teaching well-structured lessons, pitched well, according to pupils' reading skills. Pupils who read to an inspector confidently explained their reading preferences and their favourite authors.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and most are very keen to succeed and to produce their very best work. Pupils understand clearly the thread of life skills that feature prominently in all aspects of school life. They grow in confidence during their time in school, acquiring an assured and resilient approach to developing their own learning. Pupils are proud to be school councillors and value the 'good to be green' tokens which they can collect and exchange for gifts such as stationery or a bike lock.
- Staff work tirelessly to ensure that all pupils are safe and well cared for. Adults work closely with pupils and families in a supportive and sensitive manner. Pupils said that they feel extremely safe in school, a view echoed by virtually all parents through the school questionnaire and the Parent View questionnaire. Pupils show high levels of respect and care for each other, valuing their classmates' opinions and working co-operatively in lessons.
- Pupils say they love school and wear their smart school uniform with pride. They thrive in the well-ordered and positive school environment. Displays are of good quality, bright and attractive and support learning well. The school works effectively to ensure that pupils' physical and emotional well-being are valued and developed. The personal development and achievement centre is highly responsive to pupils' needs, providing a wide range of support academically, socially and emotionally. There is a constant drive to improve and find new ways to support pupils such as through 'Lego therapy' and 'motor skills united'.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and development are excellent. Pupils are well aware of the school's core values such as how to give and receive compliments. The promotion of religious diversity and tolerance is clearly seen through displays in shared areas.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The strong relationships that are nurtured in school ensure that pupils usually conduct themselves well in lessons and around school. Pupils are polite and have good manners. Playtimes are harmonious occasions where pupils play happily together with a range of equipment at lunchtime, and no one is left out.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and mostly work conscientiously. Incidents of low-level disruption are rare. Behaviour systems encourage positive attitudes to learning and the few incidents of misbehaviour are swiftly and deftly addressed.
- The relationships pupils have with adults and with each other are warm and trusting. Consequently, pupils enjoy coming to school, as can be seen in their attendance, which is above average. The school works hard to improve pupils' attendance when it is too low. Attendance of disadvantaged pupils is, however, slightly lower than that of other pupils nationally and their classmates in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In all key stages, pupils are making consistently strong progress in English and mathematics. Standards across the school are rising. The large majority of pupils in every year group are on track to reach standards expected for their age by the end of the year.
- After a flying start to learning in the early years, pupils continue to make strong progress in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and in mathematics. Current standards of attainment in Year 2 are higher than the average standards reported in teachers' assessments in Year 2 in 2017.
- Pupils make a good start in their early reading skills. In recent years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has been consistently above average.
- Standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 in 2017 were higher than those reported in 2016. In writing, standards rose considerably and were well above average. Pupils made strong progress from their starting points. Although standards in reading and mathematics also improved, achievement in these subjects lagged some way behind that in writing. Leaders were disappointed with these outcomes and have acted swiftly to bring about improvement.
- Inspection evidence shows that pupils currently in key stage 2 are now making good progress, including in reading and mathematics. Progress is continuing to accelerate across key stage 2 and standards are rising.
- Over time, disadvantaged pupils have not achieved as well as other pupils in the school or other pupils nationally. However, as a result of the effective and strategic use of the pupil premium funding, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils has improved. Current disadvantaged pupils in each year group are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Previous differences between their achievement and that of other pupils are diminishing, but are yet to be fully closed.
- Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are secure in science, but are developing in other subjects across the curriculum.
- The school is quick to identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Effective leadership and high-quality provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities ensure that these pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Activities are carefully matched to their individual needs and abilities and skilfully delivered, including by teaching assistants.
- The progress of the most able pupils has improved. This is reflected, for example, by the increased proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard of attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2017 in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress has further accelerated since the start of this school year. However, the achievement of the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, is still sometimes held back because work sometimes lacks challenge. Across the school, not all most-able pupils reach their full potential.

Early years provision

Good

- Children are eager to explore and learn. They enjoy the opportunities provided to investigate and they learn happily together. Behaviour is good and most children are happy to share and take turns. They are proud of their work, especially their writing. Leaders are skilled in developing areas of provision to maximise learning opportunities for all children, based on accurate and ongoing assessments.
- High-quality provision for two-year-olds ensures that they can work and play happily together, taking turns. Two children were fascinated by a container full of caterpillars, trying to count their legs by using a magnifying glass for a closer inspection. They drew pictures of the caterpillars, using a correct pencil grip. Children are very well prepared to start Nursery, developing mark-making skills, able to show manners and developing positive attitudes to being in school.
- A significant proportion of children start the early years with skills and knowledge which are below those typical for their age. As a result of good teaching and provision, careful observation and good questioning, children make good progress and are well prepared to start Year 1. The proportion who reached a good level of development was above that found nationally in 2017 and has risen year on year since 2014. The highest level of outcomes for children has not yet been seen over a sustained period.
- Adults observe children carefully and build upon their interests. They carefully support children's learning through prompts and skilful questioning and work alongside children during imaginative and creative play sessions. In Nursery, a group of children imaginatively created a bridge out of milk crates to cross a river of lava from which crocodiles were coming to eat them.
- Basic skills in reading, writing and number are taught very effectively. In the sessions observed, children in Nursery were able count to 20 and measure the length of the 'Gruffalo', using cubes. Some Reception children were able to write simple sentences such as 'The cat had a fish.' They formed letters correctly, and used their phonics knowledge to sound out the words they were writing.
- The early years leader leads an effective team of adults who share the same passion and drive to see young children thrive. She has a clear understanding of the strengths in the early years and has identified key areas for improvement, such as developing early writing skills. Earlier in the year, key actions were implemented to support children in managing their feelings and improving behaviour.
- Safeguarding practices are highly effective. Children are taught how to manage risks from an early age and the very effective safeguarding culture that permeates the school is equally apparent in the early years. There are no material breaches of legal welfare requirements; children are safe and well supported.

School details

Unique reference number	122239
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10048226

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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	665
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leigh Elliott
Executive Principal	Andy Roberts
Telephone number	01670 812324
Website	www.bothalprimary.org
Email address	bps@alptrust.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The school is part of the Ashington Learning Partnership Trust. It is part of a hard federation with Central Primary School in Ashington.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium and the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are just below the national averages.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school's part-time provision for both two-year-olds and the Nursery operates in the morning and afternoon. Reception children attend on a full-time basis.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, including lessons observed jointly with the head of school. In addition, an inspector listened to some pupils from Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 read. Inspectors reviewed a sample of pupils' work alongside subject leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with governors, the executive principal, the head of school, the personal achievement and development team, subject leaders and members of the teaching staff. Inspectors also met the school business manager and a number of parents and held a meeting with a group of pupils.
- Inspectors viewed a range of documents including information relating to pupils' achievements over time, the school's data on recent and current progress of pupils, and the school's view on how well it is doing. Inspectors also reviewed the school improvement plan, documents relating to performance management and safeguarding and records of behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 61 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and to the responses to the staff questionnaire. In addition, the 304 responses to the school's own questionnaire from March 2018 were also analysed. The school's website was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Donna Callaghan	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew James	Ofsted Inspector

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