

Belford First School

West Street, Belford, Northumberland NE70 7QD

Inspection dates

2–3 May 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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Under the experienced and skilled leadership of the headteacher, the desire to provide the best possible teaching, outcomes and experiences for all pupils is tangible. As a result, the school has significantly improved since the previous inspection.
- The school's determination to eliminate underperformance underpins robust and effective actions to ensure continuing improvement.
- 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.
- Outcomes for pupils are now good. Current pupils are making strong progress from their individual starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled at supporting pupils' progress in learning. Pupils are keen to work hard and succeed.
- Although teachers generally have high expectations of pupils, leaders need to ensure that expectations are always as high as possible.
- Teachers generally match work accurately to pupils' abilities. However, there are a few occasions when pupils are not moved on quickly to work which provides challenge.
- Leaders' actions to improve the teaching of reading are taking effect, and current pupils' achievement is good. However, further work is needed to ensure that pupils regularly use their number skills in mathematical reasoning activities.
- Leaders' effective use of the pupil premium funding has resulted in the difference between the achievement of current disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers, in school and nationally, quickly diminishing.
- The leadership of the well-planned curriculum ensures that pupils are enthusiastic and engaged in their learning. Imaginative use is made of exciting trips and a range of interesting visitors to school.
- The school's teaching and assessment of pupils' skills in subjects other than English and mathematics are in place. Further work is needed to effectively analyse and use the information gained.
- 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 good. They are well prepared for the next step in their education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that teachers always have the highest possible expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially for the most able pupils
 - consolidating strategies to assess and track subject-specific skills in creative and foundation subjects in order to analyse pupils' progress and address gaps in learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that pupils are always moved on quickly to work which challenges their thinking and stretches their understanding, especially the most able pupils
 - making sure that pupils have frequent opportunities to use their number skills in reasoning as well as problem-solving activities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The skilled, experienced and well-respected headteacher has been unwavering in her determination to eradicate all aspects of underperformance and ensure an excellent standard of education for pupils in this school. She embodies the whole-school ethos to provide an environment in which pupils can grow as individuals and thrive. In a short period of time, she has led actions which are transforming and improving the quality of teaching across the school. The school has significantly improved since the previous inspection.
- A shared determination to improve all aspects of school life begins with the headteacher. She has been single minded in her quest to improve teaching. This ambition to excel is shared by leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and governors. As a consequence, pupils are now making increasingly rapid progress and developing a confident approach to learning. Teachers, generally, have high expectations of pupils' achievement, but, at times, these could be even higher. Continual improvement means that the school is in a strong position to absorb the change to becoming a primary school.
- Systems and procedures to evaluate the quality of the school's performance through checking the quality of teaching are incisive and detailed, especially in English and mathematics. Leaders, including governors, stick closely to the week-by-week planned programme of monitoring and detail findings meticulously. Areas for further improvement are recorded and shared.
- The small staff team shares leadership responsibility for key areas of school life. This collegiate approach empowers staff to support each other and share good practice. Systems to assess and track pupils' progress in English and mathematics are robust and detailed. Similar systems to assess and track progress in creative and foundation subject-specific skills are being embedded and consolidated. When fully implemented, these systems are intended to enable leaders to closely analyse information on pupils' progress across the whole curriculum and address any gaps in learning.
- The school improvement plan is rooted in accurate self-evaluation, as leaders know the school inside out. It monitors, rigorously, the effect of planned actions on improving teaching and outcomes for pupils in their learning. Targets are clear and measurable. This allows governors to hold senior leaders to account and provide both challenge and support.
- The school's curriculum is rich, balanced and reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets pupils' needs and interests. Topics are closely aligned with class texts and provide opportunities for extended writing activities. Creative use is made of a wide range of visits out of school, or inviting specialists and experts into school. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about visits such as those to Lindisfarne, the local police station and a living history museum. The school provides a range of after-school clubs that further enhance pupils' access to the wider curriculum. These include rugby, drama, street dance, construction and a range of sports clubs.
- Leaders are now managing pupil premium spending effectively to provide targeted support for the very small numbers of disadvantaged pupils. Actions, resulting from the

external review of pupil premium spending, have been swiftly implemented and are proving to be highly successful. Leaders know the needs of their pupils well, and they appreciate that different cohorts of disadvantaged pupils require varying types of support. Leaders' actions are improving progress made by current disadvantaged pupils across the school. Any differences in their achievement compared to that of their classmates and other pupils nationally are virtually eliminated.

- Effective leadership has resulted in good-quality provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Their needs are identified early, and their good progress, sometimes in small steps, is tracked accurately. The school supports these pupils very well. This is because it conducts a forensic analysis of assessment data to inform support programmes and it uses resources well. Consequently, the SEN funding is used effectively by leaders.
- The innovative use of the primary school physical education and sport funding has had a significant effect on pupils' health and well-being, engagement in competitive sport and physical fitness. The headteacher is clear on the importance of physical education in underpinning pupils' confidence and developing healthy lifestyles. Beginning in early years, where children use body-boards to develop upper body strength, pupils benefit from experience in a wide range of sporting opportunities. This includes daily cycling on the school's bespoke cycle track using the school's cycles. Pupils engage regularly in competitive sports, and the whole-school weekly swimming lessons have resulted in nearly all pupils being able to swim by the time they leave school in Year 4.

Governance of the school

- Leaders, including governors, have swiftly responded to the recommendations from the external review of governance following the previous inspection. Governors, linked to an aspect or subject in school, participate in monitoring activities alongside senior leaders. Detailed reports are produced and shared with the whole governing body. Governors bring a range of appropriate professional skills and experience to the school that strengthen their effect on school improvement.
- Governors' recent training and improved skills have allowed them to question school leaders and hold them to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as for pupils' outcomes. Governors regularly review their own effectiveness, including identifying strengths on which to build. 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. Pupil assessment data is reviewed every half term, including a detailed analysis of the achievement of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff work tirelessly to ensure that pupils are safe and that their welfare is protected and nurtured. There is an ethos of vigilance. Staff are quick to identify, report and record any concerns, no matter how small, and all concerns are followed through robustly by the headteacher.
- Leaders ensure that a culture of safeguarding is embedded among all staff. They are vigilant in their duty to keep pupils safe. Policies, procedures and records are of

extremely high quality. Staff training is thorough and up to date. This includes ensuring that all recruitment procedures are watertight. All adults have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for keeping children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have been successful in their continual drive to improve the quality of teaching. Improved teaching has had a significant effect on outcomes for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, which were above those found nationally in 2017. It is also reflected in the strong rates of progress that current pupils make in each year group.
- Lessons are usually lively and interesting, capturing pupils' imagination. For example, in the Years 1 and 2 class, a science investigation allowed pupils to discover whether seeds can grow anywhere. Pupils enthusiastically set up an experiment using sand, cotton wool, compost and grit. They were knowledgeable about making predictions and fair testing.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to structure learning effectively. For example, most pupils in the Years 3 and 4 class were able to find the correct time from a clock face and write it both in digital form and as a full sentence. Older pupils used their knowledge of Roman numerals to read the time from a more traditional clock face.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and stick closely to the school's behaviour policy. Relationships are strong. As a result, pupils have the confidence to give answers, as they are not afraid to make a mistake. Pupils are encouraged to 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 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, pupils, especially the most able pupils, are not moved on quickly to work that provides sufficient challenge.
- In mathematics, basic skills of number and mental calculation are taught and consolidated regularly. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were able to successfully add three numbers using either a number line or in column addition. Pupils are becoming increasingly adept in their ability to solve one, two or even three step problems. However, although pupils have opportunities to use mathematical reasoning, these are infrequent and do not match the number of opportunities for problem solving.
- As a result of the rigorous and systematic teaching of phonics, children are getting off to a fast start in their reading in early years. Adults are skilled in teaching well-structured lessons throughout the school, pitched well according to pupils' reading skills. Pupils who read to an inspector were confident and fluent, reading with expression and obvious enjoyment of the text.
- Teaching assistants are an invaluable part of the school's teaching team. They are skilled at supporting pupils' learning, benefiting from good-quality professional development and training opportunities. They display good questioning skills, have high

expectations of pupils, take initiatives and hold responsibility very effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils show high levels of respect and care for each other, valuing their classmates' opinions and working cooperatively in lessons. All adults work hard to ensure that all pupils are safe and well cared for. Pupils said that they feel extremely safe in school, a view shared by parents and carers.
- Pupils take their roles of responsibility in the school community very seriously and are proud to be elected as school councillors. There are many opportunities to take on an important role to help the school day run smoothly. For example, they distribute milk or fruit, prepare for assembly or pack away playtime equipment. Pupils' attitudes to learning are largely exemplary, and most are very keen to succeed and to produce their very best work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and development are excellent. Pupils talked convincingly to an inspector about how they learned about people and their faith from other countries and cultures. The whole school recently visited a synagogue in Newcastle as part of its work on Judaism. Attractive and engaging displays around school celebrate pupils' artwork in the style of Joan Miro, Mondrian and Matisse.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The strong relationships that are nurtured ensure that pupils usually conduct themselves well in lessons and around school. Pupils are polite and have good manners, holding doors open for adults and visitors. Playtimes are harmonious occasions when pupils play happily together in the well-equipped and extensive playgrounds. No one is left out.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, as can be seen in their improving attendance. The school has worked very hard to eradicate low rates of attendance. Attendance is now broadly average, and very few pupils are persistently absent. Pupils and parents clearly understand the effect of missing time to learn.
- 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. Pupils were crystal clear that behaviour is good in school, and that there is no bullying at all. No parent from the large proportion who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, was in disagreement that behaviour is good in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In all key stages, pupils are making consistently positive progress in English and mathematics. 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. Standards across the school are rising.
- After a solid start to learning in the early years, pupils are continuing to make strong progress in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and in mathematics. Current standards of attainment in Year 2 match those reported in teacher assessments in Year 2 in 2017, which were above those found nationally.
- As a result of good teaching beginning in the Nursery, 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.
- Inspection evidence shows that pupils currently in Years 3 and 4 are continuing to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is continuing to accelerate across key stage 2.
- Over time, the small number of 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. The good progress of current disadvantaged pupils in each year group matches their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Previous differences in their achievement are diminishing quickly.
- Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in subjects other than English or mathematics have recently been introduced. Further work is required in order to closely analyse pupils' progress in creative and foundation subjects.
- 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 ensures 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. A greater proportion of pupils are on track to reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics this 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 high-quality opportunities provided to investigate and they learn happily together. Behaviour is good and 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. Children love being outdoors, and, given the range of exciting opportunities for them, it is no surprise.

- 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 skilfully build on their interests. They carefully support children's learning through prompts and skilful questioning. They work alongside children during imaginative and creative play sessions. Children are skilled at directing their own learning. In the Nursery, a group of children imaginatively painted a branch, which they described as the 'rainbow tree'.
- Children display high levels of cooperation. They are inquisitive and curious and enjoy playing and exploring together. Many are able to put their 'wellies' and waterproofs on independently, and they loved looking for mini-beasts as part of their topic. One group built a large structure using boards, plastic netting, crates and bricks. Another group offered to make the inspector 'fairy dust cakes' in the 'mud kitchen'.
- Basic skills in reading, writing and number are taught very effectively. In the sessions observed, children in the Nursery were able to recognise and pronounce individual letter sounds. Reception children were able to accurately write simple number sentences, using mathematical equipment to consolidate their understanding. Other children completed simple subtraction calculations.
- Children's writing skills are developed extremely well. In three different role-play areas, every opportunity is taken to promote and encourage children to record what they are doing or what they have seen. Children enjoy visiting the 'going for gold' area, to wear a sparkly gold trilby to write, many in complete sentences. Shared 'floor books' clearly demonstrate pupils' love of writing and their interest in learning.
- The early years leader leads a very effective and skilled 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 further developing print and letter recognition. Earlier in the year, key actions were implemented to support children in understanding the wider world, and in developing skills of art and design. There are strong relationships with parents and carers who visit the setting regularly. The celebration of a Burns' supper with a bagpiper and haggis was a particular success.
- 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	122244
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10048227

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

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	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Green
Headteacher	Janet Robinson
Telephone number	01668 213372
Website	www.belfordfirst.northumberland.sch.uk
Email address	admin@belfordfirst.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school in which the vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The school is in the process of converting to become a primary school, in which pupils will reach Year 6 in September 2018.
- 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 in line with the national average.
- The school's provision for two-year olds is open every Friday afternoon in term time.
- The school's part-time Nursery operates in the morning and afternoon. Reception children attend on a full-time basis.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in lessons, including lessons observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, an inspector listened to some pupils from Years 1, 2, 3 and 4 read. The inspectors reviewed a sample of pupils' work alongside the headteacher.
- The inspector held meetings with governors, the headteacher, the early years leader, the mathematics leader and the science leader. He also met the school secretary and a representative of the local authority and held a meeting with a group of pupils.
- The inspector 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. He also reviewed the school improvement plan, documents relating to performance management, safeguarding and records of behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector took account of the 24 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and to the responses to the staff questionnaire. The school's website was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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