

Alverton Primary School

Mount Road, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL6 1RB

Inspection dates

18–19 September 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have refined their plans and actions for school improvement since the last inspection. As a result, outcomes for pupils have continued to improve.
- Pupils make good progress over their time in school from their lower-than-typical starting points. Provisional 2018 key stage 2 test results show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics exceeds the national average.
- The proportion of pupils reaching higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics fluctuates. Current pupils' work and learning demonstrate teachers' greater attention to ensuring that the most able pupils make strong progress.
- Work to improve pupils' progress in curriculum subjects other than English and mathematics has got off to a good start. Middle leaders are positive about the support that they are receiving to direct this improvement successfully. Leaders rightly identify that this work needs further development.
- The early years team make sure that children get off to a great start in Nursery and Reception. Children rise to the high expectations set by adults and enjoy their learning. Good foundations are laid in all areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders' determined actions to instil the importance of good attendance in pupils and families is paying off. Attendance and punctuality have improved. Pupils' attendance is now similar to the national average.
- Pupils' accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation shows improvement since the last inspection. Teachers give pupils clear direction in developing these skills in all subjects.
- Pupils' well-being is given high priority. Adults make sure that pupils are safe, included and well supported. As a result, pupils say that they trust the adults in school. They are developing skills in how to be good citizens.
- Effective phonics teaching has resulted in improved pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 phonics standard. However, the lower-ability pupils in early years and key stage 1 do not consistently have reading books that are well matched to their developing phonics skills. Therefore, they do not quickly learn to read with fluency and accuracy.
- Until very recently, teachers and teaching assistants have not consistently insisted on high standards of presentation in pupils' work. Misconceptions in letter formation have not been addressed. This contrasts with pupils' pride in belonging to Alverton School and their good attitudes to learning in lessons.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - continuing to support and empower middle leaders to lead their subject areas with confidence, so that they use regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning alongside accurate assessment information to direct school improvement successfully.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged in all subjects, so that a greater proportion reaches higher standards
 - making sure that the lower-ability pupils in early years and key stage 1 have reading books that are well matched to their developing phonics skills, so that they can read with fluency, confidence and enjoyment
 - raising expectations of pupils' accuracy of letter formation and presentation of work, so that pupils' rates of learning are not hindered, and they consistently produce work to be proud of.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have been determined in their efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The assiduity with which they have addressed the areas highlighted for improvement in the previous inspection has had a positive effect. For example, pupils' attainment and progress in spelling, punctuation and grammar has improved and pupils' attendance has increased. Provisional key stage 2 national test results show continued improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the combined standard in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has been above the national average in this measure for the last two years.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher consistently lead by example. Their passion and care for the school are well recognised by the whole school community.
- In the short time since the last inspection in February 2018, leaders have successfully rallied the troops, giving more precise direction for improvement and checking the impact of the actions that they are taking on pupils' progress more efficiently. As well as giving a clear overview of the main priorities for improvement, the school improvement plan now contains explicit information about what actions will be taken, when they will be taken, by whom, and about how the progress of these actions will be checked.
- Senior leaders value the partnerships they have with other schools and professionals. They are very receptive to ideas and advice that will support them in making improvements to Alverton Primary School. They are happy to share their own successes with others too. Leaders use their successful partnership with the local authority to validate their school judgements and broker additional professional development for staff related to the school's improvement priorities.
- The role of the middle leaders has changed significantly over the last year. A programme of development is in place to ensure that middle leaders have the skills and knowledge needed to successfully direct and check improvement in their subject in all year groups. It is early days and this work is still very much supported by senior leaders. However, middle leaders are enthusiastic about the support that they are being given. They are in the process of gathering information to produce more effective action plans. Those plans already completed give a clear view of current pupils' attainment and progress in the specific subject, as well as precisely identified actions to be taken and timescales of when this work will be checked. Consequently, staff members and governors are in no doubt about what is expected and what is being achieved.
- Leaders have a clear strategy to diminish any academic and social gaps in the disadvantaged pupils' learning. The additional pupil premium funding is being used successfully to achieve this. Most significantly last year, training for teaching assistants has enabled them to intervene appropriately in pupils' learning. They balance support and direction effectively, enabling pupils to become more successful independent learners. This is particularly important, as disadvantaged pupils within the school have wide-ranging academic starting points.
- The experienced leader for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or

disabilities has led significant changes in assessment processes for SEN pupils over the last year. Carefully directed support has resulted in more pupils working at, or closer to, national age-related expectations. The leader knows that there needs to be a better understanding from everyone about what good progress looks like for pupils with very different starting points and needs. She has started working with other local schools to devise a more effective system. She is positive, not only about the resulting improved way of checking progress, but also about the professional dialogue opportunities these partnerships bring.

- The leader of the enhanced early years provision has effective plans in place to meet the needs of the pupils who access the outreach and in-school provision. The provision offers a wide range of unique and valued services to the youngest children in the school and in early years settings who have significant speech and language needs. Specialist staff provide tailored, structured support to develop all areas of speech and language which, over time, allows the majority of pupils to successfully integrate into mainstream education.
- Over time, the primary school physical education and sport funding has greatly increased the opportunities that pupils have to experience different sports and to participate competitively. Pupils are proud of their achievements and leaders are ambitious in encouraging as many pupils as possible to take part in events.
- As middle leadership is developing, so too is the delivery and assessment of pupils' learning in subjects wider than English and mathematics. The science curriculum has been re-evaluated since the previous inspection and plans for improvement put in place, although it is too early to see the impact of this work in pupils' achievement.

Governance of the school

- Governors carry out their role with diligence and pride. They use concise information from school leaders, records of external visits, meetings with subject leaders and information gathered from their regular meetings with groups of pupils to gain an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Their combined skills and knowledge enable them to ask probing questions about the quality of teaching and learning. They are not afraid to challenge and question school leaders when aspects of the school's work are not strong enough. They celebrate the school's strengths but know how important it is to check that the schools' priorities for improvement are being well addressed. They know that these checks confirm improvements in recent priorities, for example in pupils' attendance and in an increasing proportion of pupils working at age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and administrative staff ensure that the procedures for recruiting and checking new staff, governors and volunteers are effective. Administrative staff are tenacious in keeping up to date with changes in regulations and procedures for checking information for new staff and record-keeping. Likewise, leaders make sure that staff

receive regular training, updates and reminders about how to keep pupils safe. As a result, potential issues are spotted and reported quickly and effectively. Electronic records are frequently checked and responded to efficiently. External agencies are contacted when appropriate.

- Pupils say that they are taught a variety of ways to keep safe. Much of this teaching takes place in planned assemblies and class lessons. Some of it is responsive to specific needs. For example, teaching about keeping safe online was supplemented with additional sessions, after some older pupils had concerns about their interactions online. During the inspection, key stage 2 pupils were preparing materials to deliver to younger pupils about online safety. They were carefully considering appropriate content and what they thought pupils would most need to know at that age.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Lessons are calm and purposeful, and underpinned by strong teacher-pupil relationships. Pupils rise to the expectations set by leaders, teachers and teaching assistants, and are eager to talk about their learning.
- Recent changes in staffing, along with specific areas of teaching identified by leaders as needing swift improvement, have meant that leaders have been more explicit in their expectations of teaching and learning this year. For example, current pupils' work shows higher expectations for pupils' presentation in different subjects. Mistakes in letter formation are now being addressed. Pupils are producing more extended pieces of writing. Pupils are given clearer feedback, in line with the school's policy, and this is helping them to improve their work. There is still some variation in the consistency of the direction given. Leaders know that they need to check this carefully and have established clear timelines and processes to do so.
- New strategies in mathematics are having a positive impact on pupils' abilities to explain their work, use appropriate mathematical vocabulary and apply their mathematical skills to problems. A new programme to improve mental mathematical skills engages pupils and motivates them to respond speedily. Pupils are developing life-long mental skills as a result. Leaders' direction in ensuring that the needs of the most able pupils are well met can be seen in current challenges set by teachers, and in their extended questioning. Lower-ability pupils are well supported in becoming adept in the use of number, often using practical resources to support their learning. They currently have more limited opportunities to develop their reasoning skills than the middle- and higher-ability pupils. However, leaders can demonstrate how pupils' work shows their developing confidence and success, and how pupils are catching up, or have caught up, to the age-related expectations. Leaders are keeping a close eye on ensuring that opportunities for these pupils to reason and explain are developed.
- Pupils are positive about the considerable attention given last year to develop their reading skills and enjoyment of books. 'Alverton's Year of Books' is celebrated throughout school with photographs, painted outdoor areas and examples of the wide range of activities and work completed. Pupils speak eagerly about activities such as visiting authors, pop up events and a whole-school Shakespeare lesson. Many have been inspired to read more widely because of this work, with several of the younger pupils speaking about how they now regularly visit the local library.

- Teaching of systematic synthetic phonics in dedicated sessions is good. Teachers and teaching assistants model sounds clearly and accurately and encourage pupils to apply sounds directly into writing. As a result, the majority of pupils learn to decode new text successfully. A similar proportion of pupils to the national average achieve the Year 1 phonics standard. Pupils' reading books are often not matched to the phonics sounds that they have learned. Most pupils manage to apply learned sight vocabulary alongside decoding words phonetically. However, the lower-ability pupils try to read using too many cues, such as looking at pictures and recognising words by sight, rather than using the phonics skills that they have been taught. As a result, they struggle to read with fluency and accuracy.
- Improving pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling is high on the school's agenda. Leaders identified this as a priority in the 2017–2018 school improvement plan, and the inspection in February 2018 confirmed that this area needed further improvement. After the success of the focus on reading with the whole school community last year, the school has embarked on 'Alverton's Year of Vibrant Vocabulary'. The high profile this work has been given is clear on newsletters, when speaking to parents and carers, pupils, staff and governors and when listening to teachers' direction in lessons. As a result of this work, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected and higher standards in grammar punctuation and spelling at the end of key stage 2 has increased substantially.
- Redesigned interventions and improved direction from teaching assistants and teachers has resulted in the vast majority of disadvantaged pupils making accelerated progress. Adults know these pupils' different needs and abilities well, make regular checks on their learning and adapt their direction accordingly.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work with the leader for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to devise a programme of work and support that is well matched to each individual pupils' needs. Adults' care, guidance and high expectations of what pupils can achieve results in pupils becoming confident and successful in their learning.
- The teaching of subjects beyond English and mathematics is developing. Pupils can explain their learning in subjects such as music and art well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Adults ensure that the children in their care know that they are valued and cared for. Pupils feel safe and well supported. The school's values of care, trust and honesty are threaded through all aspects of school life.
- Careful consideration is given to supporting pupils' different emotional, social and behavioural needs. Adults constantly review and adapt strategies that they have in place to meet the needs of different cohorts of pupils and individuals. For example, Year 6 pupils rise to the privilege of spending time in their common room, and they know that their time here has to be earned.
- The school operates before- and after-school clubs that provide a safe and happy start

and end to the school day. Pupils describe the staff as 'very kind' and enjoy the opportunity to eat a healthy breakfast and play alongside pupils from other classes.

- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work. They have confidence in the headteacher and his team looking after their children and giving them positive learning experiences. One parent commented, 'We know she is in good hands,' and another described that they see the school 'going from strength to strength'. Parents value opportunities to be involved in their children's learning. Several commented on the drop everything and play (DEEP) sessions and how these have supported family life at home as well as being a great opportunity to spend time with their children in school.
- Leaders have ensured that they regularly promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This work includes pupils contributing to special Northallerton Town Council meetings and activities such as the election of a school prime minister. Positive partnerships with the local churches include church members leading religious education lunchtime clubs, engaging pupils in art work and stories.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils display positive attitudes to learning in classrooms and good conduct around the school site. Pupils can accurately explain the school's behaviour strategies and are eager to receive the praise and reward good behaviour and working hard can bring. They equally understand, and respect, the consequences of not following the school rules.
- Leaders have made significant strides in improving pupils' attendance. They have worked hard to make sure that pupils and their families understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality. High expectations, rewards and celebrations, and the swift follow-up of absences have contributed to a considerable improvement in pupils' attendance. This is now similar to the national average. Persistent absence has also reduced substantially, but leaders rightly continue to aim to improve this further.
- Positive interactions between adults and pupils, a range of equipment and organised activities, and the opportunity to meet with friends and 'chill out' mean that pupils respond very positively when asked about breaktimes and lunchtimes. Any boisterous play is nipped in the bud, and pupils feel confident that they can speak to any of the adults if they have a concern.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders' swift response to areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection has ensured that outcomes overall for pupils have continued to improve.
- After much lower-than-national outcomes in phonics in 2015, the effective implementation and delivery of phonics teaching has secured improvement. Phonics outcomes have been in line with the national average for the last three years.
- For the last three years, pupils' outcomes at the expected standard in reading and writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 have been at least in line with, and often better than, the national averages in these subjects. The proportion of pupils

reaching higher standards in these subjects has fluctuated over time. However, the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards in 2018 shows improvement in reading, writing and mathematics compared to 2017 outcomes.

- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics combined has risen steadily over the last three years, and has been stronger than the national average for the last two years. Provisional 2018 test results show that pupils performed better than the national average at the expected standard in reading and writing and mathematics. However, the proportion of pupils reaching higher standards remains below the national average in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have identified that some higher-ability pupils have not made the same strong progress as other pupils over time. Current pupils' learning shows that teachers and teaching assistants have improved the direction that they are giving to the most able pupils to ensure that they deepen and develop their learning.
- Improved direction and support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has resulted in the vast majority making good gains in their learning.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years team makes sure that children make a smooth and happy transition to school life. When the children join early years, their skills and knowledge, particularly their language and communication skills, are below those typical for their age. The early years team takes every opportunity to help children develop and practise their skills in all areas of the curriculum. As a result, children make good progress in Nursery and Reception and most leave early years well prepared for Year 1.
- Positive relationships between adults and children, and between the children themselves, are very quickly established. The early years team sets the bar high in their expectations of good behaviour and attitudes to learning that serve the children well as they move on to key stages 1 and 2.
- The leadership of early years is strong. The experienced early years leader works effectively with other adults to quickly establish what is needed for each child. Adults have a good understanding of the children's starting points in all areas of the curriculum. With the leader's guidance, adults plan provision and activities to support all children in making the strongest progress possible.
- The team are eager to involve parents in their children's learning. Entrance areas are welcoming with information for parents and access to the children's learning journey folders. Parents are positive about the start their children get to school. They value the opportunity to be involved in learning sessions and school activities.
- Adults consistently model and reinforce good vocabulary. They make sure that nursery rhymes and stories are delivered and learned enthusiastically throughout the day. Phonics is taught effectively, and children delight in the routines and songs that are part of this work. A positive start to reading is made, with lots of talking about stories and the characters in them. However, the lower-ability children do not consistently have reading books that are matched to their learning in phonics. When they read these books, not enough emphasis is given to using phonics to decode new words,

because many of the words in the books are not phonetically decodable. Therefore, lower-ability children struggle to read with fluency and accuracy.

- The areas of provision in the classroom are well-planned to plug any gaps in the children's learning. Reading, writing and mathematics activities and resources are plentiful, but so too are opportunities to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world, for example. Leaders and the early years team have been developing the outdoor learning areas. They want to make sure that children can develop their skills across all areas of the curriculum outdoors, and that the provision particularly meets the needs of the most able pupils.
- Children in the enhanced early years provision access a wide variety of well-planned practical activities that engage them, check their understanding and develop their language and communication skills successfully.
- Adults' high expectations are clear in their attention to supporting children's well-being and ensuring that all health and safety requirements are met. Children are taught how to keep themselves and their friends safe. They eagerly join in activities such as getting equipment out safely and tidying away sensibly.

School details

Unique reference number	121368
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10053122

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Porteus
Headteacher	Richard Linsley
Telephone number	01609 773 524
Website	www.alvertoncommunityprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	headteacher@alverton.n-yorks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 February 2018

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with speech, language and communication needs. This enhanced early years provision currently provides in-school support for 1 pupil and outreach support for 36 pupils who are aged 3 to 5.
- The early years consists of a Nursery and a Reception class.
- The school runs a before-school club and an after-school club.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the additional pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who receive support for SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.

- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- A much lower proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons across a range of subjects in all classes. These observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and/or the deputy headteacher.
- During visits to lessons, the inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their work to find out more about how well they are learning.
- Meetings were held with pupils, and the inspectors talked informally with pupils around the school. The lead inspector listened to pupils read and talked with them about reading. Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons and around the school at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors visited the before- and after-school clubs.
- Inspectors met regularly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Meetings were also held with the early years leader, curriculum leaders, new staff, staff from the early years enhanced resource provision, the school business manager, midday staff and the lead teacher for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from North Yorkshire local authority.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' evaluation of school performance, school improvement planning, minutes of meetings of the governing body and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors also reviewed information relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors met with parents before school and took into account the 73 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View.

Inspection team

Kate Rowley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Dixon

Ofsted Inspector

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