

# Ellington Primary School

Warkworth Drive, Ellington, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 5HL

## Inspection dates

8–9 January 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher ensures that pupils are well supported and cared for. His longstanding position at the heart of the community has been a steadying influence during a period of flux for the school. Pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Middle leaders are new to their posts. They demonstrate good subject knowledge and a keen awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. However, they are in the earliest stages of their career. Their role in monitoring the impact of the school's work is not fully established.
- Improvement plans are detailed and identify the right priorities. However, they are not focused sharply enough on the desired gains in pupils' outcomes for them to be evaluated effectively.
- Governors are dedicated and give generously of their time. They place great emphasis on supporting leaders and staff. They successfully promote pupils' mental health and wellbeing. However, their monitoring role is not organised effectively. Consequently, they have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness.
- The early years leader knows the children well and has ensured that children's good outcomes have been sustained over time.
- The quality of teaching is good. Staffing is settled following a period of turbulence. Staff are keen to share good practice and are creative in planning engaging activities for pupils. However, occasionally such activities are not sufficiently demanding for pupils.
- Historically, pupils' outcomes by the end of key stage 2, particularly in mathematics, have not been good enough. However, recent improvements to teaching approaches and to assessment are ensuring that pupils' current outcomes are improving.
- Leaders' commitment to pupils' personal development and well-being is excellent. Strong relationships and embedded mutual respect ensure that the school is calm and purposeful. Pupils' behaviour is good.
- The highly engaging curriculum is filled with lots of memorable experiences for pupils. However, occasionally activities in subjects like history and geography do not build progressively on what pupils already know and can do and understand.
- The safeguarding culture is well embedded. Staff are clear about the important role they play in keeping pupils safe. They are vigilant in reporting concerns, and referrals to other agencies are timely.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - action planning is sharply focused on the desired gains in pupils' outcomes so that the impact on pupils' progress can be evaluated accurately
  - middle leaders' role in evaluating the work of the school is firmly established
  - there is greater clarity in the progression of knowledge, skills and understanding identified within programmes of study for subjects like history and geography
  - governors' role in monitoring is strengthened to enable them to have an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of leaders' actions.
- Improve pupils' outcomes, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - there is a greater emphasis placed on developing pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills
  - pupils are challenged to think hard about their learning so that more pupils can achieve the expected and higher standards.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The longstanding headteacher has been a steadying influence during what has been a turbulent time for the school following its last inspection. He has steered the school through its transition from a first to a primary school. At the same time, he has managed significant staffing turnover well and has rebuilt the leadership team effectively. Throughout this challenging period, he has ensured that the school's ethos of inclusivity has remained at the heart of all decision-making. His dedication and commitment to the school are clear to see.
- Middle leaders are recently appointed. They, too, are dedicated and enthusiastic in their roles and have secured an accurate understanding of what needs to improve. While they are in the earliest stages of developing their leadership skills, their actions are already improving pupils' outcomes. However, their role in monitoring is not fully established. As such, they are not yet evaluating the impact of their actions effectively.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is recently appointed. She has already improved procedures for identifying and supporting the needs of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND). She offers support and advice to colleagues and ensures that the expertise from fellow professionals is utilised effectively. Her role in monitoring and evaluating is not yet fully established.
- School development plans identify the correct improvement priorities. Leaders have invested heavily in providing high-quality training for staff and in purchasing additional resources to support improving pupils' outcomes. However, plans are not focused sharply enough on the desired gains in pupils' progress and attainment. Consequently, it is difficult to evaluate accurately the success or otherwise of these plans.
- The curriculum is organised through a topic-based approach, which provides a meaningful context for pupils' learning. There is no shortage of effort from teachers to ensure that such topics are full of highly engaging and interesting experiences for pupils. However, occasionally the planning of activities within subjects such as history and geography do not build pupils' knowledge and skills progressively. As a result, pupils are not deepening their subject-specific understanding sufficiently.
- Leaders, including governors, have ensured that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to minimise any differences between disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and other pupils. Where differences are evident, this links with pupils' additional needs.
- Leaders have ensured that the physical education (PE) and sports grant is used effectively to promote pupils' engagement in a range of sporting competitions. It also effectively supports and promotes pupils' physical and mental health and well-being.
- The local authority provides honest and purposeful support to the school. Moderation activities have helped to secure accurate assessment procedures. Local authority advisory staff are effectively supporting subject leaders to improve the quality of teaching effectively, particularly in mathematics.

## Governance of the school

- Governors share the headteacher's commitment to the school and to their role. They place great emphasis on ensuring that staff and pupils' mental health and well-being is prioritised. They have been especially supportive of leaders during the recent period of staffing turbulence.
- A review of records, from governing body meetings, indicate the high level of diligence governors apply to the school's financial stability. They monitor, closely, the effect of the reduced admission limit, following conversion to a primary school and any additional funding received to support pupils. However, while governors know the impact such funding has on improving individual pupil's outcomes, they are less aware of the overall whole-school impact.
- Governors visit the school regularly. However, more recently they have focused heavily on evaluating the impact of leaders' actions on supporting staff and pupils' mental health and well-being and reviewing human resource issues. This is at the expense of being clear of the effect that leaders' actions are having on improving overall pupils' progress and attainment.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, including governors, place high priority on ensuring that pupils are safe. They ensure that all staff are appropriately checked and vetted before beginning employment and are suitably trained in keeping children safe. Some administrative omissions in the record of these checks were quickly amended during the inspection.
- The culture of safeguarding is well established. Staff are highly perceptive to any changes in pupils' demeanour. Consequently, any concerns are reported to the designated safeguarding lead in a timely manner. In turn, referrals to child protection and safeguarding agencies are swift in order to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are supported and cared for. The school operates a paper-based system for record-keeping. While this is stored securely, related documents are not always easily accessible.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors are praiseworthy of staff's efforts to keep their children safe. Pupils were equally confident that there were no unsafe places in school and that all adults would keep them safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers in all year groups have high expectations for pupils to be respectful, achieve well and to take pride in their work. As a result, classrooms are purposeful and calm. Pupils are keen to participate in their lessons and to present their work to a high standard.
- Teachers are highly creative when planning lessons. Consequently, pupils are engaged and excited to learn. For example, pupils in Year 3 were greeted by the 'BFG' (the big friendly giant), who introduced the story for their studies. Such a creative approach is

replicated across the school, in a range of subjects. Occasionally, the sequence with which activities are planned do not build progressively on what pupils already know and can do. For example, geography activities in Year 4 were more demanding than those presented to older pupils.

- The teaching of phonics has improved and is leading to better outcomes for pupils. Because of leaders' actions, pupils now receive a discrete daily lesson and are encouraged by all staff to use and apply their phonics skills outside of this session. In 2018, this led to a greater proportion of pupils, than that seen nationally, reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. This is a marked improvement on previous years.
- Teachers use every opportunity to support pupils' wider reading skills. Other subjects are frequently introduced using 'quality' texts as a stimulus for learning. This is consolidating and extending pupils' reading skills effectively. As a result, in 2018, pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 were above the national average and their progress improved from the previous year.
- Pupils can write confidently in a range of styles. This is because they receive many experiences that provide a purpose for their writing. Teachers ensure that links are made between identifying and practising the key language features associated with each style of writing. Although pupils' progress is improving overall, there are inconsistencies in the challenges that pupils receive to improve their work further, for example using editing and redrafting techniques.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving rapidly. Although only in post since the start of the school year, the mathematics subject leader has identified quickly the immediate need to develop pupils' mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills. She has worked closely with local authority advisory staff to introduce new teaching approaches which provide increasing opportunities for pupils to reason and to solve problems. Although this is leading to improving outcomes for pupils currently in the school, there is more to do to ensure that the new teaching approaches are embedded fully.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders know that pupils learn best when they feel safe and secure in their environment. They are uncompromising in ensuring that Ellington is a welcoming, safe, caring and inclusive school. All pupils are valued and cherished for the unique individuals that they are. Every effort is made to ensure that provision is tailored to their individual needs, particularly those of the most vulnerable pupils.
- There have been no reported incidents of bullying, racism or use of derogatory language of any kind. This is because of the highly respectful environment that is nurtured by all adults. Everyone is fully committed to the school's strongly inclusive ethos. Pupils are equally aware of what bullying is and the forms it can take.
- Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that they were very happy and that they felt very safe in school. They were extremely confident that, if they had any concerns,

there would be a trusted adult in whom they could confide.

- The breakfast club offers a calm and purposeful start to the school day. Pupils' safety is taken very seriously and signing in procedures are highly effective. High levels of mutual respect are evident, with pupils demonstrating excellent manners to each other and to adults.
- Leaders facilitate strong links to the local community and to local charities close to their hearts. Pupils' individual talents are nurtured and celebrated. Each year a 'good citizen' award is presented in memory of beloved former pupils of the school. This embeds a strong sense of belonging in pupils and reflects their evident civic pride.
- A strong focus is placed on preparing pupils to be safe online. Pupils demonstrate a keen understanding of the dangers associated with online grooming and financial scamming. This work is supported heavily by work with national children's charities, so it remains pertinent to current issues. Likewise, the PE coordinator ensures that pupils have a strong understanding of the need for open water awareness, given the school's proximity to the sea.
- A raft of cultural experiences, access to the 'children's university' and attendance at several arts festivals, alongside a strong programme of assemblies, support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and cements pupils' awareness of British values successfully.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Playtimes are lively occasions. Pupils are energetic, and they are fully involved in a range of games and activities. Leaders ensure that pupils' play is well supervised and structured to ensure that pupils are safe.
- Pupils take pride in their work and appearance. They are keen to contribute to their lessons and are happy to answer questions. However, occasionally pupils are given activities that lack challenge. At these times, pupils become distracted and lack motivation.
- The use of exclusion is rare and is always the last resort. Staff manage pupils with more challenging behaviours effectively.
- Pupils' attendance is improving and is now close to the national average. Previously, higher rates of pupils' absence were linked to individual cases, all of which were appropriately authorised. All individual absences are followed up assiduously to ensure that pupils are safe. However, leaders are not routinely evaluating overall absences of pupils and pupil groups for their impact on pupils' outcomes.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- The number of pupils within each year group varies greatly. Since the last inspection, the school has become a primary school and assessment information now includes the end of key stage 2 outcomes. However, a significant proportion of pupils continue to transfer into and out of the school system at the end of Year 4. Consequently, the cohort of pupils, by the end of key stage 2, varies significantly compared to those who

were present at the end of key stage 1. This means that there is limited comparison between pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 and those at the end of key stage 2.

- In 2017, pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 2 were below the national average for reading, writing and mathematics. In the same year, pupils' progress in these subjects was well below average. In 2018, pupils' progress improved to average for all subjects and pupils' attainment in reading and writing showed marked improvement. However, attainment in mathematics remained disappointingly below the national average.
- Overtime, outcomes at the end of key stage 1 have remained broadly in line with national averages. However, in 2018, pupils' attainment in mathematics also declined to be below the national average.
- The recently appointed mathematics subject leader has worked quickly to improve pupils' learning. Her efforts are paying dividends. There is evidence in pupils' work that pupils currently in the school are now making good progress in acquiring their mathematical knowledge and skills. The school's assessment information indicates that there are already more pupils in the current Year 6 achieving at the expected level than in the previous school year.
- Leaders have refined their assessment procedures. Pupils are now assessed more regularly in reading, writing and mathematics to ensure that any dips in attainment are identified early. As a result, any additional support and interventions can be implemented quickly. Consequently, current pupils' outcomes are improving. This is endorsed by work seen in pupils' books.
- By the time pupils leave Year 2, almost all of them have achieved the required standard in the national phonics screening check. Because of changes to the organisation of phonics teaching, outcomes in Year 1 improved markedly in 2018. They were well above the national average.
- The progress of pupils with SEND is good. This is because the SENCo is ensuring that pupils' needs are accurately diagnosed and that any subsequent support or interventions are appropriate.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils varies greatly in each year group. This is partly due to the movement of pupils, particularly in Year 4. By the time pupils reach Year 6, there are very few disadvantaged pupils within the year group. This makes any comparison with national data unreliable. Nevertheless, leaders check disadvantaged pupils' progress individually and collectively. They ensure that pupils make good and improving progress from their varying starting points.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years leader is knowledgeable about how young children learn. She deploys staff effectively to ensure that children are kept safe and that they are supported well to access all areas of learning.
- Assessment of children's achievements are accurate. The early years leader uses this information effectively to adapt provision and ensures that children make good progress from their varied starting points. As a result, the proportion of children

reaching a good level of development has been broadly in line with national averages over several years.

- Children enter Nursery with skills that are generally below those that would be typically expected. They settle quickly into the classroom because of the skilled and experienced adults who build strong and trusting relationships with ease. Consequently, children are confident in the setting and demonstrate self-regulating behaviours, an enthusiasm to learn and take part in all that is on offer.
- The early years leader has introduced a 'discrete' phonics session into the daily routine. This means that children now get off to a good start with the acquisition of their early reading skills. In all areas of learning, children are encouraged to apply these skills to both read and write. Such work is supporting the development of children's early literacy skills well.
- Adults are deployed effectively in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Adult-led sessions are focused and purposeful and move children's learning on successfully. However, when children access free choice activities, adults' interventions are less effective and do not probe children's thinking sufficiently.
- Partnership with parents is strong and improving. As a result, parents are becoming increasingly involved in their child's learning. A range of workshops and 'stay and play' sessions provide parents with frequent opportunities to contribute successfully to their children's learning and development.



## School details

Unique reference number	122198
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10057873

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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barry Nelson
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Vardy
Telephone number	01670 860 769
Website	<a href="http://www.ellingtonprimaryschool.co.uk">www.ellingtonprimaryschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:Pam.Hunter@ellington.northumberland.sch.uk">Pam.Hunter@ellington.northumberland.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	May 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of white British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The school offers breakfast club provision.
- Since the last inspection, the school has extended its age range to include pupils up to the age of 11. At the same time, the admission limit of the school was reduced from 42 to 30 pupils per year group in order to accommodate the extended age range on the same school site.

## Information about this inspection

- This was a full section 5 inspection following the conversion from a section 8 'no formal designation' of exempt schools.
- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Some of these observations were completed with members of the senior leadership team. During lesson observations, inspectors talked to some pupils about their learning and reviewed their work in books.
- An extensive review of pupils' work in a range of subjects was completed by inspectors, with some scrutiny alongside middle and senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with recently appointed middle and senior leaders, local authority officers and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors talked to parents at the beginning of the school day and more formally with staff members and pupils.
- Pupils were observed at playtime and lunchtime. Inspectors talked to a group of pupils about their learning, about pupils' behaviour, and they listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans.

## Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alison Stephenson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
M1 2WD

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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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