

# Morpeth Stobhillgate First School

Stobhillgate, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2HA

## Inspection dates

26–27 March 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' plans for improvement lack precision, timescales and accurate targets. As a result, governors have not challenged and supported senior leaders with sufficient rigour.
- Pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable. Not enough pupils are reaching and exceeding the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of middle leadership requires further development. Subject leaders have not had the opportunity, routinely, to check on the content of the curriculum and the standards reached by pupils. Consequently, pupils are not making enough progress across the wider curriculum.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable. Some teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations, but this is not always the case.
- Pupils' reading books are not matched well enough to their phonic knowledge and skills.
- Pupils' progress in their writing is not consistently good enough. Pupils do not take pride in their handwriting and presentation. Work is often untidy and careless.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years is not consistently good.

### The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. He has already taken incisive action to improve the quality of teaching in phonics and mathematics.
- The quality of phonics teaching is consistently high.
- Over the past two terms, leaders have improved the way mathematics is taught. The rate of progress pupils make in mathematics is already increasing.
- Pupils behave very well in school. Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management, by:
  - improving governors' self-evaluation skills so that they have a more accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses
  - strengthening the school's improvement plans, including the early years improvement plan, to ensure that there are precise timescales and targets against which governors can hold leaders to account
  - further developing the expertise of middle leaders, including in the early years
  - improving the skills of subject leaders, particularly in the leadership of writing and across the wider curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, by:
  - ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
  - making sure that pupils' reading books are well matched to their phonic knowledge and skills
  - making sure teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of all pupils, especially the most able pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The new headteacher has taken decisive action to halt the decline in standards of achievement. On taking up post, he quickly evaluated the many areas requiring improvement and prioritised the most urgent actions. He rightly identified phonics and mathematics as key priorities. The new programmes he introduced in September 2018 are used consistently well by all teachers, and the new methods of teaching phonics and mathematics are already bearing fruit.
- The headteacher actively seeks parents' and carers' views. For example, at the November 2018 parents' evening, parents completed feedback sheets. This revealed to leaders that some parents do not think that the work their children receive is challenging enough. Inspectors found that there is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils across the curriculum.
- All staff and governors are ambitious for the school to improve. Teachers and other staff have completely embraced the headteacher's vision for school improvement. Staff engage with the headteacher's carefully planned programme of continuing professional development willingly. This has improved teachers' subject knowledge in the areas of the curriculum the headteacher has tackled so far.
- The headteacher has taken steps to develop the skills of some subject leaders and there is evidence that this is working. The mathematics subject leader has a thorough subject knowledge and has embraced leadership training opportunities, including studying for national qualifications in subject leadership.
- The mathematics leader works with a local teaching school and mathematics hub. In addition, mathematics specialists have also been invited into school to train teachers. Curriculum leadership in other subjects, including writing and across the wider curriculum, is at a much earlier stage of development. Pupils' knowledge and skills are not built incrementally across the wider curriculum and this slows pupils' progress.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is an effective leader. The SENCo holds the national professional qualification for this role. She has a secure understanding of pupils' learning needs. The SENCo works closely with other specialist professionals to make sure that pupils' needs are met. Parents are happy with the support the school provides to meet their children's additional needs. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils with SEND, together with disadvantaged pupils, benefit from additional government funding. Funds are used well to support pupils who have additional social, emotional and mental health needs. For example, pupils can share their worries and feelings with the play therapist who comes into school every week. This helps build pupils' resilience and reduces their anxiety.
- Leaders use sports funding effectively. Parents and pupils value the increased opportunities for after-school clubs and sporting competitions.
- Leaders are effective in promoting pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Pupils show great pride in their school. For example, two Year 4 pupils

were exceptional ambassadors for their school when discussing their work on British values with inspectors. The pupils are proud of their charitable work, which is on a local, national and international scale. Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong.

### **Governance of the school**

- An external leadership review, undertaken in February 2019, identified governance as the first area for improvement. The chair of the governing body said governors were already aware that governors needed to improve their leadership.
- There have been changes to the membership of the governing body and they recently undertook a skills audit. The results show that governors have a good combination of skills between them.
- Governors' self-evaluation is overgenerous. Governors told inspectors that they think pupils' performance is good enough. However, given children's attainment on entry to the school, and the proportion of children entering with skills and knowledge that are above typical for their age, pupils require greater challenge in order to reach their full potential.
- The school improvement plan includes objectives for improvement. However, the detailed plans lack precise and measurable targets against which governors can hold leaders to account. For example, one of the key priorities set in September was to ensure that all teaching is at least good by July 2019. The timescales for addressing these targets are too long to enable governors to monitor the progress leaders and teachers are making sharply enough.
- Governors have established a positive culture and ethos at the school. They fully share the headteacher's vision for school improvement.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders keep detailed records of child protection training. Staff, including lunchtime supervisors, were able to tell inspectors what they do to keep children safe. Staff raise concerns promptly if they are worried about pupils' safety.
- Attendance overall, for pupils of statutory school age, is improving. However, disadvantaged pupils do not attend school often enough. Leaders are beginning to analyse the attendance of different groups. The school checks to ensure that pupils who are absent without a reason are safe.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at school.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies in different classes and in different subjects across the school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in relation to phonics has improved markedly since the headteacher introduced a new phonics scheme at the beginning of the academic year. However, the books that pupils are given to read by adults in

school are not matched closely enough to the sounds they know. Many books are too easy for the pupils. They are not challenged to achieve their very best.

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in their writing are too low. Many pupils do not develop a fluent handwriting style by the end of Year 4. Common spelling errors, such as the days of the week, are frequently not corrected. Generally, spelling is poor.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop writing stamina, using and applying their phonics skills to extended, independent writing. This slows the progress that all pupils, and especially the most able pupils, are making. Despite this, pupils with SEND are making good progress in writing. Pupils with SEND are very well supported in lessons by skilful teaching assistants and this is helping them to make good progress. Inspectors noted evidence of very good progress in disadvantaged pupils' writing since September.
- The teaching of mathematics is inconsistent but improving rapidly. Leaders have introduced new resources, and a calculation policy, that all teachers are using. The teaching of mathematics is particularly strong in key stage 1.
- In the most effective mathematics lessons, teachers keep pupils interested by moving between different areas of mathematics, helping pupils to make links between different aspects of the subject. For example, in a Year 2 lesson the teacher helped pupils make connections between the fractions of shapes, weights and measures. The teacher and pupils used mathematical vocabulary precisely. Pupils clearly enjoyed the high level of challenge. This fluency is building Year 2 pupils' confidence in mathematics.
- There is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils in key stage 2 mathematics lessons. This is slowing the rate of progress in Years 3 and 4.
- The quality of teaching across the wider curriculum is inconsistent. There is variation between different classes and different subjects. Leaders have a clear intent to improve the curriculum. They are already working in partnership with subject leaders, across a local partnership of schools, to design a new curriculum to be introduced in September 2019.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are self-confident. They were very keen to tell inspectors about their positive attitudes to learning. One Year 4 pupil described her love for reading, saying, 'When I'm reading a book, I feel like I'm in a whole different world.'
- Some disadvantaged pupils are missing out on learning because they are not coming to school often enough. The attendance figures for this group of pupils are getting worse.
- Pupils also enjoy the many trips and visits that enrich their learning. Key stage 2 pupils gave examples of visiting Beamish Museum, the Peter Pan Theatre, Kirkley Hall Zoological Gardens and Plessey Woods Country Park. Pupils also enjoy working cooperatively in teams, for example building dens in their forest school.

- Pupils have a secure understanding of how to stay safe online. They enjoyed the safety quizzes they completed during safer internet day and could describe the things they had learned about keeping themselves safe.
- Pupils know how to stay fit and healthy. They participate enthusiastically in the new after-school clubs. They are proud of their successes in competitive sporting events. Pupils won the regional tri-golf and Northumberland orienteering competitions in 2018.
- Pupils make good progress in swimming. Most Year 4 pupils, when they left the school in 2018, were able to swim at the standard the government expects pupils to achieve by the end of Year 6.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and courteous, and they move calmly around the building. Pupils say there is very little bullying, and when this does happen, pupils say teachers are good at sorting it out.
- Pupils also behave generally well in lessons. They have positive attitudes to their learning when teaching is strong. When teaching is less effective, pupils lose interest, and this leads to some low-level disruption in lessons.
- Leaders do not analyse pupils' behaviour carefully enough. Consequently, they do not report information about pupils' behaviour to governors.
- Inspectors observed pupils playing well together over the lunch break. Behaviour in the dining hall was also good.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been just above average for the last two years.
- Key stage 1 results have been variable over the last three years. They were below the national average in 2017, but above in 2018. Results at the higher standard have been consistently below the national average for the last three years in reading.
- The school's assessment information shows a larger proportion of pupils are meeting and exceeding the standards expected for their age in reading and mathematics than at this time last year. Writing results remain lower than the national standard for greater depth.
- The work in current key stage 2 pupils' books shows their work is below age-related expectations in writing. The attainment and progress of key stage 2 pupils in reading and mathematics is variable.
- Pupils with SEND are making good progress from their individual starting points. Disadvantaged pupils are also making good progress.
- Leaders, currently, do not evaluate how well pupils are learning in other areas of the curriculum.

## Early years provision

## Requires improvement

- The proportion of children, including disadvantaged children, reaching a good level of development at the end of the early years has remained steady over the last three years. Despite entering the early years with skills and abilities that are typical for their age, a quarter of children do not reach a good level of development by the age of five. In addition, the most able children do not make the progress of which they are capable. Not all adults have high enough expectations of the children.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years, although too variable, has improved since the headteacher and early years leader took up their posts at the beginning of the 2018/19 academic year. Despite this, some poor pockets of practice remain. For example, during the inspection a group of young children were unable to follow an adult's instructions and form numbers correctly because they were sitting cross-legged on the floor, clutching their white-board pens in one hand while balancing their white boards on their knees. The task was almost impossible. The children were unable to succeed.
- Communication between the school and parents has improved this year. An increasing number of parents are adding their children's at-home achievements into the school's online assessment records. Parents are also taking the opportunity to talk to early years staff during the newly implemented 'soft start' to the school day. They appreciate the new, termly parent/teacher consultation meetings and written reports.
- The local authority's early years adviser is providing effective support for the early years team and, as a result, the quality of the indoor and outdoor environments is beginning to improve, although there is still some way to go.
- The standard of children's behaviour varies. While some children settle quickly to their tasks, others wander aimlessly between activities, climb on furniture, chase each other around and enter into boisterous play.
- A highly structured phonics scheme of work was introduced in September 2018. As a result, children are acquiring phonics and early reading skills much more rapidly than previously. In addition, children are also making more rapid progress in mathematics, which is a whole-school priority for improvement.
- The early years environment is safe and secure. Shortcomings in relation to the early years welfare requirements were rectified by the second day of the inspection.
- Children are happy to attend school and many skip into class at the beginning of the day. They enjoy educational visits, such as the one to Wallingford Hall. During the inspection, they revelled in a visit from Northumberland Eshottheugh Farm. The children in the Reception Year listened attentively and followed instructions carefully as they handled a snake, a bearded dragon, an African hissing cockroach and an African pygmy hedgehog.

## School details

Unique reference number	122246
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10057875

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	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Watson
Headteacher	Glen Whitehead
Telephone number	01670 513382
Website	<a href="http://www.stobhillgate-northumberland.co.uk/">http://www.stobhillgate-northumberland.co.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@stobhillgate.northumberland.sch.uk">admin@stobhillgate.northumberland.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	25–26 April 2012

## Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2018.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school and has falling pupil numbers.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is broadly average.
- Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- Children in Reception attend full time and children in Nursery attend part time.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors, often accompanied by the headteacher, observed learning in all classes. Together with the headteacher or subject leaders, inspectors looked at pupils' work.
- Together with the headteacher, inspectors looked at information about pupils' current attainment and progress.
- The headteacher and school business manager shared records relating to attendance and safeguarding with inspectors.
- Inspectors listened to six pupils read from Years 1, 2 and 3. Pupils' learning and interactions in small groups, in lessons, in the dining room and at social times on the playground were observed. Inspectors met with a focus group of seven pupils from Years 3 and 4.
- Inspectors evaluated leadership documents provided by the school, including the school improvement plan, local authority reports, monitoring records, health and safety reports, the report following the recent external review of leadership and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, early years staff, subject leaders, the school business manager and the SENCo. Additional meetings were held with three members of the governing body and two representatives from the Northumberland school improvement team.
- Parents' views given verbally were also considered. Inspectors held telephone interviews with parents of pupils with SEND.

## Inspection team

Tracey Ralph, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Belita Scott

Her Majesty's Inspector

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