

Inspection of a good school: Otterburn Primary School

Otterburn, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE19 1JF

Inspection dates: 10 October 2019

Outcome

Otterburn Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

This small village school has a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Pupils of all ages get on well together. They are happy and kept safe. Parents are very pleased about how staff care for and help their children learn.

The headteacher and staff are working hard to provide the best for pupils. Actions to help pupils improve their reading are beginning to have a positive effect. Also, staff are getting better at teaching mathematics. Some of this work is not yet consistently in place.

In subjects like history staff use exciting ways to get pupils interested. Teachers have begun to plan what important knowledge they want pupils to learn. Yet, sometimes pupils do not remember the key information from their history lessons.

Pupils behave well in this school. They listen attentively in lessons. We noticed pupils display lovely manners. Older pupils are supportive and helpful with younger pupils in school. Pupils told me that any incidents of bullying are exceedingly rare. They are confident that staff will help them with any concerns.

The headteacher and governors are determined that this school will continue to improve. At times, the governors have not challenged leaders enough about the curriculum development.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and staff are working hard to improve subject planning and teaching. They aim to meet the needs of all pupils. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Where subject planning is more established this has a positive effect on pupils' learning. For example, from an early stage, children learn phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) in a systematic way. I saw children in Nursery learn about

rhyme through an interesting card game. Here, the staff encouraged children to find and repeat the rhyme. This effective work continues into Reception. Here, structured phonics teaching helps children to develop secure phonics knowledge.

Leaders have reviewed approaches to teaching reading. Teachers aim to give pupils reading books which match to pupils' phonics knowledge. This worthwhile approach needs some refinement. Sometimes less able pupils struggle to read their books successfully. Some less able readers do not read regularly enough to an adult. Leaders have spotted this. They have plans in place to address this.

In early years, staff have introduced a range of new books. We saw children using these well. They used the books to develop their play. This helped them to learn about characters and story sequences. Storytime is a regular activity across all classes. In Reception the teacher's reading of a familiar story captured children's attention. They joined in enthusiastically with parts of the story that they could remember.

In other classes teachers now use quality texts to teach whole-class reading. This recently introduced approach is beginning to develop pupils' understanding and vocabulary. At present, teachers need to hone these approaches to help all pupils succeed. Teachers are setting up new approaches to assess pupils' learning in reading. This useful development needs to be embedded. Pupils are now reading together with other pupils across the school. Older pupils told me that they enjoy this development.

Suitable training has helped to improve staff expertise in teaching mathematics. The planning and sequencing of mathematical knowledge is improving. This is beginning to impact positively on pupils' learning. Plans are in place to ensure that all staff have this better teacher subject knowledge.

The school has begun to review the planning for subjects such as history. This work is at an early stage of development. The sequencing of what teachers want pupils to know is not yet clear enough. Visits and visitors increase pupils' interest in history. Currently, pupils do not remember enough of the important knowledge needed in this subject.

Relevant local authority support is helping leaders develop the curriculum. The headteacher wants to use partnership working to improve planning in all subjects. At present leaders have not clearly mapped out these developments. How the school intends to improve the curriculum is not yet clear enough.

There are a wide range of after-school clubs for pupils to attend. Before- and after-school provision is available. These opportunities enrich the curriculum for pupils. The school is actively engaged with the local community, including the church. The school council helps pupils understand how to be an active citizen.

In this small school staff carry a wide range of responsibilities. The headteacher has ensured that any school developments take workload implications into account. Staff are confident that leaders support their well-being and work-life balance.

The school has a recently established federation governing body. Governors are

supportive of the school, but they have not challenged leaders enough. They do not question leaders' information about what pupils are learning. Also, they have not ensured that leaders have updated school policies within the required timeframe.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have training and up-to-date information about how to keep pupils safe. They know what steps to take if they have any concerns. Procedures to identify pupils at risk are robust. The school seeks help for pupils and their families promptly. Leaders complete relevant safeguarding checks for all staff, governors and volunteers. This ensures they are suitable to work with children. The headteacher carefully checks the destination of pupils who leave the school. Leaders, including governors, need to keep the school's safeguarding policy up to date so that it reflects the most up-to-date national guidance.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and staff need to embed the approaches to improve the teaching and assessment of reading. Staff need to use approaches to whole-class reading with quality texts more effectively. Developments to assess pupils' reading attainment need to be fully implemented. This will help teachers check pupils' learning. Teachers need to check that the books provided to the least able readers are helping them to succeed. Teachers need to make sure that these pupils have plenty of opportunities to read to an adult.
- Some teachers have received helpful training to improve their subject knowledge in mathematics. Leaders need to ensure that the trained teachers share this subject knowledge more widely across the school so that teaching is well matched to the planned learning for pupils.
- Work to develop the sequencing of pupils' learning in other subjects, such as history, is at an early stage of development. Leaders are now clearer about the steps required to improve the curriculum. This needs to continue to develop.
- In this small school leaders carry a wide range of subject and other leadership responsibilities. They have a great willingness to create a well-designed curriculum which meets the needs of pupils. Some support from the local authority is beginning to help the school work in partnership with other schools on this initiative. Leaders would benefit from having a clearly structured plan for curriculum development. This would show how they will develop their curriculum over the next two years, while at the same time make these improvements manageable for the staff.
- There is a recently established federation governing body. Governors are beginning to provide an improved balance of support and challenge for school leaders. They need to ensure that their questioning is more specifically focused on the curriculum and its effect on pupils' learning. They also need to assure themselves that leaders keep key

documentation, policies and the school website up to date.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Otterburn Primary School to be good on 15–16 March 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	122215
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10110816
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	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret Tait
Headteacher	Tina Henderson
Website	www.otterburn.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of The River Rede Federation.
- There is a federation governing body for the two schools in the federation.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher, the subject leaders for reading, mathematics and history, and the special educational needs coordinator.
- We considered a range of safeguarding information and documentation provided by the school and available on the school's website. We met a range of staff to consider their understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures. Pupils told us how the school helps them to stay safe. One inspector met with the headteacher who is one of the school's designated safeguarding leads to review safeguarding records. Another inspector reviewed the single central record.
- We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at playtime and lunchtime. The lead inspector reviewed responses to the staff, pupil and parent surveys. He also met a parent at the start of the day.
- We considered three subjects in detail: reading, mathematics and history. These deep dives included discussions with the headteacher and subject leaders, lesson visits,

review of pupils' books, discussions with pupils and discussion with teachers where we completed lesson visits.

Inspection team

Michael Reeves, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew James

Ofsted Inspector

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