

Inspection of The Sele First School

The Sele, Hexham, Northumberland NE46 3QZ

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive during their time at Sele First School. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils have positive behaviour and apply themselves to their learning. Bullying rarely happens and pupils are confident it would be dealt with if it did.

Pupils enjoy being at school and spending time with their friends. There are a range of activities available at playtimes with well-thought-through routines so that all pupils can enjoy outside play in the limited space available.

Pupils love being in the school garden, equipped with a pond, seating for storytelling and a nearby tree house. There is timetabled access including dedicated time for Reception children as part of their outdoor learning. The garden is a place where pupils relax and think about the natural world. One pupil commented, 'I think school is a happy place, teachers are very understanding. I like going into the garden, being free with nature.'

Leaders ensure that staff care for pupils well. Pupils with emotional needs have access to therapeutic support from trained staff within school. They help pupils increase their confidence and talk through any anxieties they may have.

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

The new headteacher has sensitively brought about positive changes. There is a strong focus on the well-being of the whole-school community and an impetus to make the school even better. Staff appreciate the support of leadership in reducing their workload and giving them time to work together on curriculum planning.

Curriculum leaders are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Many undertake personal research to ensure they are up to date. All curriculum subjects are clearly sequenced with identified end goals. Leaders are revising these in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, having identified gaps in pupils' learning. In some subjects, such as mathematics, leaders are implementing plans to be even more ambitious to ensure pupils have more depth in their knowledge and understanding.

In history, the approach to the teaching of timelines and chronology is very well developed. Pupils particularly enjoy hands-on experiences remembering key dates and events, especially those written on their 'toilet roll' timeline. Pupils develop enquiry skills from an early age and are enthusiastic about history as a subject. The curriculum is enhanced by educational visits and involvement in local projects with partners such as the Vindolanda Charitable Trust.

Leaders prioritise the learning of phonics. There is a highly structured phonics scheme, which staff teach consistently. Three subject leaders oversee the phonics programme and identify gaps in pupils' learning and next steps. However, there are

differences in how rapidly pupils are learning within certain year groups. Leaders attribute this to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pupils are taught in ability groupings to address this. Some pupils have moved on from the phonics programme and are rapidly learning more complex spelling patterns. This is increasing the gap within the peer group, who are being left behind.

In personal, social and health education, pupils have a good understanding of relationships and what makes for positive friendships. However, some pupils have a limited understanding of cultural diversity in modern Britain and cannot articulate in any depth how Hexham may differ from other areas. This means pupils lack opportunities to develop well rounded and balanced views on ethnicities and cultures.

Children in early years enjoy a well-sequenced curriculum led by adults with opportunities for free choice. Children relish playing in the role-play areas. Reception children have limited access to outdoor learning so there is no opportunity for children to independently choose to be outside. Leaders have plans to improve this with an extension to the garden area.

Most pupils are well behaved, however, some pupils show low-level disruption, talking over each other and/or the teacher and do not follow the teacher's requests promptly. A few pupils do not pay attention well enough in lessons such as phonics. Some pupils do not understand the impact of their behaviour on others. Leaders are introducing a new behaviour management approach which positively rewards pupils for excellent behaviour. There is more emphasis on talking through any inappropriate behaviour so that pupils develop more self-awareness. Governors and parents support this policy.

Governors have an excellent understanding of their role. They both support and hold leaders to account. Monitoring visits are undertaken to assess the impact of decisions made. They have high ambitions for the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established effective systems to identify pupils with safeguarding needs. They ensure that the appropriate agency is involved as soon as possible and that pupils and families are given the support they need.

There is a culture of vigilance and an attitude that, 'It could happen here.' All expected pre-employment checks are carried out and there is a rigorous recruitment process. Staff new to school receive induction training. Staff have regular updates on national and local safeguarding issues.

Governors have also undertaken safeguarding training. They have regular monitoring visits and receive timely reports from the leadership team.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are significant differences in how rapidly pupils are learning phonics within certain cohorts. The teaching of pupils in ability groups has further widened the gap between the lower and upper-ability groups. The difference in attainment is quite stark. Leaders should further develop their existing strategies to ensure pupils who need to catch-up quickly with their peers in phonics do so. This will ensure all pupils do not fall even further behind their peers and have equal access to the key stage 2 curriculum.
- There is a lack of consistency in staff implementing the new behaviour policy and in expectations of pupils' behaviour. This leads to a few pupils showing some low-level disruptive behaviour. Some pupils, while not disrupting others, are not actively engaged in their learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff are consistent in terms of expectations of behaviour for learning and consistently apply the behaviour policy.
- The curriculum does not cover cultural diversity in enough depth and opportunities to visit places with more diversity than Hexham have been limited during the pandemic. This means pupils do not have rich opportunities to develop an understanding of the multicultural nature of modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that there are more opportunities in the curriculum, the resources used and the places visited to promote cultural diversity, to ensure pupils have a better understanding of the region and their place within modern Britain.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

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

If you are the school and you are 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	122242
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10199297
Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Katie O'Brien
Headteacher	Rebecca McVittie
Website	www.selefirst.org/
Date of previous inspection	26 October 2006

Information about this school

- A new headteacher commenced employment in September 2020.
- The school is part of the Three Rivers Teaching School Hub.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, early years leader, special educational needs coordinator and early career teachers.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in five subjects: reading, mathematics, history, physical education and design and technology. To do this they met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and met with teachers and pupils. Inspectors also looked at curriculum documentation for early years.

- The lead inspector met representatives of the local governing body, including the chair. She also met with the local authority education adviser who supports the school.
- Responses to the pupil, parent and staff surveys were also taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Mary Cook, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Deborah Ashcroft

Ofsted Inspector

Stephen Fallon

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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