

Inspection of a good school: Stannington First School

Church Road, Stannington, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 6HJ

Inspection dates:

23 November 2022

Outcome

Stannington First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to school. They are happy and safe in this nurturing environment. The school's values of honesty, kindness, perseverance, resilience, respect and teamwork thread through every aspect of school life. Leaders value pupils' ideas and respond to their suggestions. This includes providing a range of new activities at lunchtime.

All staff expect pupils to behave well. Pupils are courteous and respectful towards each other. Pupils understand what bullying is. Bullying is rare and pupils trust adults to resolve any concerns that they may have.

Leaders expect all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well. Pupils strive to meet these expectations. There is a working 'hum' as pupils focus on their learning, often cooperating with others.

Children in early years get off to a flying start. The high level of interaction between staff and children encourages confidence. Children eagerly take part in lessons, which are designed to be active and purposeful in delivering the curriculum. Children are excited by their learning and want to learn more.

Teachers provide pupils with many out-of-school activities and clubs. All pupils learn to ride a bicycle and can use the cycle track situated in the school grounds.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is broad and balanced and builds up pupils' understanding over time. Subject leaders are knowledgeable and are always looking to further improve the curriculum. They plan some curriculum subjects with colleagues from the local first and middle schools. This is to ensure that pupils transferring to middle school have the best possible start. Long term goals are broken down into smaller learning steps, starting in early years.

Within each subject, leaders have drawn on the local area as a context for learning. In geography, Stannington and the River Wansbeck are the focus for mapping and fieldwork skills. Pupils grapple with increasing levels of complexity in maps as they move through school. Leaders have identified the specific vocabulary they want pupils to learn. However, in some subjects, such as science, the learning activities do not always include the intended vocabulary. This means that when key subject words are written by pupils, some are spelled incorrectly.

Leaders have recently made significant changes to the mathematics and reading curriculum areas. These changes are effective and the delivery of the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. In both subjects, teachers regularly check pupils' understanding in lessons through questioning. Using this information, they tailor their lessons to meet pupils' needs. Leaders enhance learning through activities, such as practical work, physical movement and spoken interactions.

Pupils start to learn phonics from the beginning of the Reception Year. Pupils practise reading with books that closely match the sounds that they know. As a result, they read with increasing fluency and accuracy. All staff are trained to teach early reading well. Parents welcome the advice given on ways to support their child with early reading. Whole-class story sessions are very popular with pupils. They enjoy listening to their teacher read. The youngest pupils join in with the stories and rhymes that they know well.

Pupils are polite and responsive in discussions. Teachers praise pupils for their positive behaviour. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently. Senior leaders promote and secure good attendance. They actively help parents to overcome any barriers that they may have in bringing their child to school.

Leaders have carefully designed the personal development curriculum, so that learning in class marries with assembly themes. Pupils are very knowledgeable about British values. Pupils learn about their local heritage and traditions through singing and dance. Staff enrich the history curriculum by visits to places, such as Beamish, a local history museum. There are also visitors to school. Pupils experienced moments of awe and wonder when looking at owls and eagles from the Kielder Bird of Prey Centre in real life.

Leaders are adept at making the most of opportunities for pupils. Concerns about congestion and parking developed into a long-term project on sustainable travel. Through this, pupils learn about keeping healthy, keeping safe and protecting the environment. Pupils benefit from the cycling proficiency lessons. All can borrow a bicycle or have their own bicycle serviced.

Governors have effective systems to check and evaluate all aspects of school. They know the school well. They have overseen the expansion of the school and arranged suitable accommodation for the new classes. Leaders are building deeper connections with the community. Pupils take part in services at the parish church, but also use the church grounds for forest school activities.

Staff feel well supported by leaders. Their workload is manageable, and work-life balance is taken seriously. New initiatives have reduced time spent on planning. Staff feel they are part of a close-knit team, who support and care for one another.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained and are alert for any signs that pupils may be at risk. They know what to do if they have concerns over pupils' safety and leaders act on these quickly. Leaders are relentless in securing the right help for pupils at risk. They work well with external agencies to get support for pupils and families. Leaders check that adults are suitable to work with pupils.

Leaders ensure that pupils are taught essential life skills linked to the potential dangers in the local area. Pupils know to 'be safe, be seen', as a result of their recent road safety lessons.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have identified the subject-specific vocabulary they want pupils to learn and when in the curriculum. However, in some subjects, pupils have few opportunities to use and write some of the identified vocabulary. When pupils do write the subject-specific words, some spell them incorrectly. Leaders should ensure that teachers match learning activities to the planned curriculum to enable pupils to use subject specific words more effectively.

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 an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2012.

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.

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	122228
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10240614
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	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Keith Taylor
Headteacher	Alexandra Palmer
Website	www.stannington.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes in the senior leadership of the school since the last inspection. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, early years leader, the special educational needs coordinator and met with representatives of the local governing body. The lead inspector met with the local authority education adviser who supports the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in three subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum documentation for these and other subjects.

- To inspect safeguarding, the inspectors scrutinised the single central record and reviewed safeguarding paperwork and systems. The inspectors spoke to leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Mary Cook, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicole Park

Ofsted Inspector

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