

Inspection of Morpeth First School

Loansdean, Morpeth, NE61 2AP

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 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 enjoy attending Morpeth First School. This was evident on inspection when some pupils told inspectors that they feel 'treasured, courageous and empowered' at school. Visitors are made to feel welcome. Leaders have high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils achieve well.

Some pupils say they appreciate spending time in the 'Nurture Nook', where staff help them learn how to manage their emotions. There are strong relationships between pupils and staff. In most lessons, pupils are calm and learn purposefully. Pupils know how to resolve disagreements. They also feel reassured that staff are there to help them if they need it. This helps pupils feel safe and happy at school. Most pupils understand what bullying is and know it is wrong. Bullying is extremely rare. The work of staff ensures pupils are kind to one another.

Character education is a strength of the school. Leaders recognised the need to build up pupils' strength of character after the start of COVID-19. Leaders ensure positive character traits, such as 'resilience, confidence and determination', underpin the experience of everyone who attends the school. Projects such as collecting and recycling litter in the local community and collecting food for the local foodbank, are helping pupils to value their community. Pupils say the nurture practitioners help them to manage their emotions, so that they can learn more.

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

Leaders have redesigned the curriculum to ensure that pupils learn a broad and balanced curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have identified the most important knowledge that they intend pupils should learn stage by stage. This enables pupils to build their knowledge over time. For example, in computing, the curriculum identifies the core knowledge pupils must learn across each year. Teachers use curriculum plans well, so that pupils gain key subject-specific knowledge, such as the vocabulary of coding from Nursery to Year 4. Many pupils talk with confidence and use appropriate vocabulary when they describe what they learn in computing. However, in some subjects, such as geography and physical education (PE), plans are not consistently broken down into the small steps of knowledge and skills. Some teachers do not choose learning activities that emphasise the most important knowledge and skills. As a result, some pupils do not develop the detailed knowledge they need to achieve well.

Pupils get off to a flying start in mathematics in Nursery. Children learn to measure using connecting blocks. Children's understanding of how to use a range of objects to count, helps them as they progress through school. In Year 2, pupils identify and describe the properties of two-dimensional shapes. They recognise shapes by counting the sides and vertices. In most classes, there is an emphasis on using correct mathematical vocabulary. However, some aspects of the mathematics

curriculum are new and are not as well embedded for older pupils as they are for younger ones. Some older pupils are less engaged in the learning than younger ones. Some teachers do not check older pupils' understanding nor adapt their teaching in response to these checks. This means that some pupils do not develop detailed knowledge, so that they are well prepared for new learning.

Leaders prioritise reading across the school. As soon as children start in Nursery, staff read stories and rhymes to them to develop their language knowledge. Staff, who are trained in the phonics scheme, ensure pupils learn to read fluently. Children in Nursery are well prepared to start phonics in Reception by learning about the sounds that are made by the letters in their names. Teachers carefully sequence the sounds that they introduce to pupils, so that pupils build on what they already know. Leaders make sure that staff check pupils' knowledge and use their checks to provide additional support to those that need it. This helps children in early years and pupils in key stage 1 to catch up. Older pupils enjoy regular story time with staff. They also enjoy reading the books available in the libraries in classrooms as well as the main library. Teaching enables older pupils to gain the vocabulary knowledge and broader knowledge needed to read more complex texts with understanding.

Pupils with SEND learn well. This is because the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures teachers and assistants know the small steps needed to support pupils in class. Leaders work well with outside agencies to ensure the right support is in place. This includes movement breaks to support some pupils' learning. Staff receive training on a range of topics, such as emotional well-being. Therefore, staff know how to help pupils with SEND to succeed.

Pupils benefit from a range of clubs that link to their interests, such as robotics, football and dance. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments, such as the flute and piano. Leaders ensure the activities pupils experience are character building, such as helping to plant 145 trees in the forest school. Pupils value their roles of responsibility as school councillors.

The headteacher and school leaders have nurtured a supportive team ethos, where everyone is valued equally. Staff appreciate the support from leaders for their well-being. Leaders take action to ensure staff workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

School leaders ensure that all staff receive regular training and updates about safeguarding. Staff know the local safeguarding risks. They are vigilant. Staff use the school's safeguarding systems effectively and report any concerns. The designated safeguarding lead and other leaders ensure they make referrals to external agencies in a timely manner. The curriculum is planned to ensure pupils are taught about risks and how to speak to a trusted adult if they are worried. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet.

Appropriate recruitment checks are undertaken to ensure all adults are safe to work in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' subject knowledge is variable in some subjects, such as geography and PE. Some teachers are not ensuring that all learning is purposeful. Some of the activities do not help pupils learn the knowledge they need to achieve well. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans in these subjects enable pupils to build their understanding of important subject-specific knowledge, skills and concepts over time. Leaders must make sure teaching enables pupils to embed learning and build securely on what they already know.
- In mathematics, some teachers do not use assessment well enough to check pupils' understanding to inform their teaching. As a result, some pupils do not learn what is intended in the curriculum. Leaders should continue to provide effective support to improve teachers' pedagogical knowledge, so that assessment is used accurately to identify pupils' misconceptions and learning activities amended to support them.

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	122210
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10211882
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	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Co-Chairs Mike Finlay and Craig Appleby
Headteacher	Nadine Fielding
Website	www.morpethgoosehill.firstschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 and 28 November 2007

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in November 2020.
- Since the last inspection, two new co-chairs of the governing body have been appointed.
- The school has provision for three-year-olds.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and nine governors, including both co-chairs. Three governors joined the meeting online. The lead inspector also met

with the local authority school improvement partner. Inspectors met with senior leaders and the school's SENCo.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, computing, geography and PE. 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. The lead inspector observed some pupils reading to familiar adults.
- The lead inspector met with leaders to discuss the school's approach to behaviour management. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour moving around school, in lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors discussed the school's safeguarding procedures with a range of staff. The lead inspector reviewed the school's documentation regarding safeguarding, including the school's single central record. Inspectors discussed how safe pupils feel in school.
- The lead inspector analysed the responses to the pupil, staff and parent surveys.

Inspection team

Kathryn McDonald, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Deborah Ashcroft	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Heaton	Ofsted Inspector

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