

Inspection of a good school: Ponteland Primary School

Callerton Lane, Ponteland, Northumberland NE20 9EG

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2023

Outcome

Ponteland Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Ponteland Primary is a truly inclusive school where pupils, parents and carers, and staff all feel a sense of belonging. Leaders at all levels work hard to provide an ambitious curriculum that goes beyond the academic. A strong extracurricular offer and exceptional cultural experiences enable pupils to flourish.

After-school clubs include those for football, judo, first aid and musical theatre. The Shakespeare club recently performed 'Much Ado About Nothing' at Northern Stage. Pupils have visited Valencia in Spain to perform a dance. There is an annual Year 6 visit to France, and Year 5 pupils from across the trust will visit Greece later this term.

Leaders go 'above and beyond' to provide high-quality pastoral support. Families experiencing difficulties appreciate the help that the school provides. For example, during the COVID-19 restrictions, leaders worked with a local food bank to deliver food parcels.

Pupils feel happy and safe in school. Staff model behaviour expectations and provide a consistent approach. Pupils move around school in a calm and orderly manner. Behaviour in classrooms is good because pupils are eager to learn. Pupils cannot recall any incidents of bullying, but they are confident that these would be dealt with swiftly by a trusted adult.

Pupils enjoy a number of roles and special responsibilities in school, such as playtime monitor, reading buddy and elected school councillor.

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

Leaders have a sharp understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. These are checked regularly by members of the academy committee and directors from the trust to ensure that good progress is being made. There is the capacity in school for leaders to share their expertise to support other schools in the trust.

Leaders have prioritised reading since the previous inspection. A new approach to teaching phonics was introduced last year. All staff have been well trained to ensure that a consistent approach is taken throughout school. Children are prepared well in Nursery to begin the phonics programme from the beginning of Reception. New reading books have been purchased to ensure that books match the sounds that pupils are learning. Teachers make regular checks to ensure that pupils are on track. Pupils who are at risk of falling behind receive additional help to keep up with their classmates. Some pupils have gaps in their knowledge of letter sounds and receive extra support.

Pupils love to read. The curriculum is based on core texts, and leaders have carefully chosen books for pupils to enjoy in each year group. Pupils are enthusiastic about reading and can talk about themes such as disability and gender in the books they have read. Pupils enjoy regular visits to the school library and benefit from the community library's location on the shared site.

Leaders have worked hard to review the curriculum. Mindful of the school's context, there is a strong global theme threaded throughout. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Careful thought has been given to the knowledge that pupils are to learn. This starts in early years. For example, children access counting and pattern-making activities in Nursery and Reception, where adults introduce important mathematical vocabulary, such as 'taller' and 'shorter'. The curriculum is sequenced clearly to build on pupils' prior learning. For example, in mathematics, pupils can apply their knowledge of multiplication and length to find the area of a shape. Pupils find daily activities, such as 'fluent in 5', helpful to revisit and remember knowledge they have previously learned.

The curriculum is designed with clear end-points, which teachers use to check pupils' understanding and adapt their teaching accordingly. In subjects other than mathematics and English, such as history, pupils talk confidently about their learning. Year 2 pupils can remember the main events of the Great Fire of London and describe reasons why the fire spread so quickly and what changed as a result. However, pupils sometimes struggle to make links between topics they have learned or to understand their learning as part of a bigger picture.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are quickly identified, and leaders act on advice from relevant professionals. Pupils with SEND access the curriculum alongside their classmates, often with additional adult support and resources such as cubes and counters. This helps them to experience learning in a way that is meaningful to them.

Pupils know that they have a 'voice' and that they can make a difference in society. They learn about social and environmental issues, such as hunger, inequality and global waste. Pupils have taken action to address these issues. For example, pupils write to their member of parliament about climate change and campaign for the use of reusable plastics.

Leaders take staff workload and well-being seriously. Staff appreciate changes that have been introduced, such as a new marking and feedback policy. This has impacted positively

on workload. Leaders have an open-door policy; they are approachable and will offer support when needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Appropriate pre-employment checks are undertaken to ensure that adults are safe to work in school.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in school. Leaders and staff know, 'It could happen here', and safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff receive regular training and know when to record and report a concern. Appropriate referrals are made in a timely manner. Leaders champion vulnerable families and they are not afraid to challenge services to secure the right support.

The curriculum supports pupils to stay safe, for example through bicycle training and road safety awareness. In personal, social and health education, pupils learn about consent and healthy relationships. Pupils are knowledgeable about online safety. They know not to share personal information and when to block gamers and report incidents when playing games online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not understand the bigger picture of what they are learning because teaching does not always make this clear in an age-appropriate way. Therefore, in some subjects, such as history, pupils cannot build their subject knowledge over time. Leaders need to check that teachers are helping pupils to remember the curriculum content that they have been taught, so that they can integrate new knowledge into bigger ideas.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school to be good in February 2017.

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	145780
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10268479
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	471
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gerry Miller
Headteacher	Lynn Blain
Website	www.pontelandprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ponteland Primary School is part of Pele Trust.
- The school offers wraparound childcare, with a breakfast club and after-school provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. He met three academy committee members (including the chair of the academy committee), the chair and chief executive officer of the Pele Trust board, and a representative from Northumberland local authority. Discussions were also held with some teachers and support staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, he 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 inspector considered the views of parents and carers via responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult, observed their behaviour as they moved around school and at lunchtime, met with pupils formally to gather their opinions and held informal discussions across both days of the inspection.
- A wide variety of safeguarding information and documentation was scrutinised, including referrals to external agencies and other records.

Inspection team

Andy Jones, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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