

Inspection of a good school: Bellingham Primary School

Redesmouth Road, Hexham, Northumberland NE48 2EL

Inspection date: 15 June 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The relationships between staff and pupils at Bellingham Primary School are respectful and caring. Leaders and staff are proud of the village school and its role in the local community. Pupils know each other well and are supportive of each other. Older pupils relish the reading they do with children in early years.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. They want all pupils to do well. Leaders have focused on developing aspects of reading and promoting a love of reading across the school. The curriculum in other subjects is being developed to match leaders' expectations. It is not currently implemented with consistency. Leaders recognise the further work needed to strengthen the curriculum on offer beyond English and mathematics.

Pupils behave well in school. Behaviour in class is mostly calm and focused. Pupils know when behaviour does not match the expectations of leaders and other staff. They say that bullying is not something that happens often at Bellingham Primary School. Pupils say that adults would sort any problems out if they were to happen.

School visits and sporting activities are helping pupils experience a wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils demonstrate high levels of resilience around school life. For example, they had to adapt quickly when a recent flash-flood impacted the school building.

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

Leaders have undertaken work to develop the curriculum. Learning in reading and mathematics is clearly planned and sequenced. Leaders have prioritised reading across the school. The development of the reading den and reading corridor is part of this work.

Pupils in the earliest stages of reading enjoy daily phonics lessons. They contribute to lessons with enthusiasm. Teachers use the phonics scheme alongside regular assessment to ensure that pupils are building their phonic knowledge well. Books given to pupils at the earliest stages of reading do not always match their phonic ability. Alongside this, there is variability in the way in which staff support pupils to read when supporting pupils one to one.

In mathematics, there is a clear sequence of learning. Leaders of mathematics are passionate and knowledgeable. Pupils are building sound number knowledge over time. This includes children in early years where early number work is increasing children's readiness for the Year 1 curriculum. However, the opportunity to apply this knowledge and use mathematical reasoning to solve problems is not used consistently.

In the wider curriculum, such as in geography, leaders know that there is further work needed to embed the curriculum aims. Leaders have planned a geography curriculum, starting in early years, that is in line with the national curriculum. Learning activities do not consistently ensure that the intent of the curriculum is clear. The sequencing of some of the curriculum is not consistently effective in supporting pupils to build, connect and deepen their subject knowledge over time.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported by knowledgeable leaders. Plans to support pupils with SEND are clear and focused. Leaders make appropriate referrals to specialist agencies. Specialist guidance given is used in planning and classroom practice. Leaders make adaptations to meet the needs of pupils, including a dedicated nurture space for pupils to learn in.

Pupils have a good level of respect for each other. They are considerate of the needs of each other and recognise where peers might need support. The personal, social and health education curriculum is helping pupils to understand concepts around healthy relationships and healthy lifestyle choices. For example, pupils know that the daily mile helps to keep them fit. Pupils have an emerging understanding of British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. Pupils talk excitedly about how they are voting on their summer school trip. Leaders look for opportunities for pupils to engage in different off-site activities. Pupils take part in sporting events and hear about careers. Leaders have prioritised widening the experiences of pupils. Pupils have visited cities and have experienced cultural visitors at school.

Routines and expectations are clear during breaks and at lunchtime. During bike week, pupils took turns to use their bikes in a calm and orderly way. Behaviour in classes is usually settled. Where the curriculum is less well planned, some pupils can lose their focus.

Leaders are considerate of workload. There is a strong team effort from staff in school. Staff are proud to work here. Early career teachers are well supported. Leaders know the next steps the school needs to take. Governors must work alongside leaders to ensure this is realised.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders for safeguarding take effective action when concerns for pupils arise. Record-keeping shows the timely actions taken by leaders. This includes making referrals to other agencies where needed. Staff and other stakeholders such as governors receive regular safeguarding training. Staff are alert to issues in the local area that may pose a risk to pupils. There is a culture of 'it could happen here' when staff talk about their safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders and those responsible for recruitment make the necessary checks on adults who work in the school.

Pupils feel safe here. They are vigilant in keeping themselves safe in school. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of online safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In subjects in the wider curriculum, such as geography, the curriculum is not sequenced effectively so that pupils acquire a secure knowledge base. The implementation of the curriculum is variable, with pedagogical choices not well matched to curriculum aims. Pupils are not securely building knowledge and skills over time. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum is sequenced so that pupils can make connections between what they are learning. Leaders must support teachers to ensure that learning is well matched to curriculum outcomes.
- There is not a consistent approach to ensuring that reasoning and problem-solving are part of the mathematics curriculum. Pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and thinking and to demonstrate reasoning skills. Leaders should develop the sequence of mathematics teaching further so that pupils can regularly apply their mathematical knowledge.
- Support for pupils at the earliest stages of reading when reading to adults is variable. Pupils are not developing early fluency because books are sometimes too challenging and pupils are not supported to apply the sounds they know in a consistent way. Leaders must ensure that books are well matched to pupils' phonological knowledge and that phonic strategies are used consistently by adults who support pupils to read.

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 March 2013.

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	122183
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10241881
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Simon Mobberley
Headteacher	Wendy Goddard
Website	www.bellinghamprimary.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Bellingham Primary School is part of The Bellingham Federation alongside Bellingham Middle School.
- The schools in the federation share the same governing body and are on the same site.
- There are currently no pupils on roll in Year 5 or Year 6.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

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.
- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to staff. They spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of

pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils at the early stages of reading with a familiar adult.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to staff, pupils and a range of stakeholders, including governors. Safeguarding documentation was scrutinised, including the safeguarding policies and the single central record of recruitment checks. Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed relationships between pupils and adults. Inspectors also met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents and carers informally in person and formally through the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The views of staff were considered through the staff survey and through meetings with them. Pupils' views were considered through a pupil survey and through pupil meetings.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from the governing body and with the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classes and during breaks and lunchtime.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Milligan

His Majesty's Inspector

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