

Inspection of Butterknowle Primary School

Pinfold Lane, Butterknowle, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL13 5PB

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this rural and very small community school. Staff have created a warm and safe learning environment for the pupils in their care. Bullying is rare. Pupils behave well and attend regularly.

Governors' ambition for all pupils to achieve well is not realised fully. Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not develop fluency in reading early enough. This delays their progress across the curriculum in key stage 2.

The school is developing its curriculum planning from the early years to Year 6. Subject expertise is now drawn from all three primary schools in the federation. This work, although at a very early stage, is starting to make a positive difference for pupils. Pupils are beginning to recall and use knowledge learned in some subjects, such as geography, confidently in other curriculum areas.

Pupils' horizons are widened by the varied opportunities the school provides. For example, they benefit hugely from the residential visits, including to coastal and city locations, that take place in Years 4, 5 and 6. Extra-curricular clubs, such as messy play club, are attended well.

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

Creating the federation of three schools has been governors' focus over recent years. This, together with turbulence in staffing and COVID-related issues, has contributed to a decline in academic standards. Leaders, including governors, acknowledge that the school's curriculum has not supported pupils to achieve end-points that prepare them well for the next stage in their educational journey. They have begun to implement strategic improvement plans. The school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is accurate.

Pupils, including pupils with SEND, do not learn to read early enough. Too many do not achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check until the end of Year 2. Staff do not deliver the school's phonics scheme consistently well. In phonics lessons, adults sometimes pronounce sounds incorrectly. Pupils' poor letter formation is not addressed as a matter of course. This term, the books that early readers are given to read are at just the right level of difficulty.

Stay-and-play taster sessions for two-year-olds provide very effective transition. Children settle into school life quickly when they join the Nursery class. Early years staff develop children's speech, language and communication needs consistently well. Other areas of learning in the early years are not addressed as well.

The curriculum for mathematics is established and delivered confidently. Pupils enjoy mathematics. They do not have immediate recall of their multiplication tables. Other curriculum subjects, including foundation subjects such as design and technology,

are at differing but much earlier stages of development. For example, the curriculum in computing has only been in place since the beginning of the current term. The new curriculum planning for computing shows seamless progression in knowledge, skills and vocabulary, from the early years to Year 6. Staff need training to deliver this new curriculum confidently. Staff training is required across all foundation subjects at Butterknowle.

The school is addressing teachers' workload well by distributing curriculum leadership throughout the federation's schools. Teachers appreciate having responsibility for one curriculum subject rather than the four or five they had previously.

The individual needs of pupils with SEND are identified quickly. The school's plans to meet these needs are reviewed and shared with parents and carers regularly. Despite these established practices, pupils with SEND are not making the academic progress of which they are capable.

Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming. They have a deep understanding of right and wrong. Pupils treat their friends, teachers and visitors as they like to be treated themselves. The school ensures that pupils know how to keep themselves safe when working and playing online and outside in the locality. For example, as the Gaunless river flows through the village, pupils learn about water safety in their swimming lessons and learn about the dangers of cold water shock from the fire and rescue service.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils are not confident readers by the time they leave Years 1 and 2. Their lack of fluency impacts negatively on the progress they make in key stage 2. The school should make sure that all staff in the early years and key stage 1 access appropriate training and deliver phonics with expertise.
- The early years provision requires further development. Children do not make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders should ensure that children learn the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare them well for the rigours of the curriculum in key stage 1 and beyond.
- The curriculums for the foundation subjects are at an early stage of development. Pupils do not learn, remember and use sufficient knowledge and vocabulary across the whole curriculum. The school should make sure that carefully sequenced curriculums are implemented, and that staff's subject knowledge is developed, to ensure pupils know and remember more.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	114102
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10290020
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joy Bellis
Headteacher	Clare Carr
Website	thedalesspartnership.co.uk/our-schools/Butterknowle-primary-school/
Date of previous inspection	1 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school, alongside Frosterley Primary School and Woodland Primary School, is part of The Dales Federation. The headteacher is the executive headteacher of all three schools in the federation.
- The school does not use any alternative providers of education.
- Wraparound care, including the breakfast club and an extended after-school club, is overseen by the governing body.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors, including the chair and the vice-chair of governors, and the school's school leadership adviser from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and computing. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.

Inspection team

Belita Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Olie Flitcroft

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023