

Inspection of Mickley First School

Mickley, West Road, Stocksfield, Northumberland NE43 7BG

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 February 2024

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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Andrew Hudson. This school is part of the Cheviot Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the co-chief executive officers, Simon Taylor and Alice Witherow, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Carvin.

What is it like to attend this school?

Mickley First School has a strong sense of community and inclusion. The school has created a friendly and welcoming environment for pupils and their families. Staff foster strong relationships with parents and carers. Pupils know that they have a trusted adult to talk to in school if they need one. This helps them to feel safe.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' achievement. Pupils are eager to learn and achieve well. Pupils understand and appreciate the reward system for positive attitudes to work and behaviour. While most pupils behave well, sometimes, staff are inconsistent in their expectations of how pupils should behave. This means a small number of pupils sometimes distract others with their low-level disruptive behaviours. The school is aware of this and is already working with staff to bring about improvements.

Pupils value the leadership opportunities that the school provides such as school council and eco-council. They vote for house captains and vice-captains. The school has strong community links with the local church and residential home. Pupils can contribute to the village by gardening in the school-owned patch of land.

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

Leaders have implemented a curriculum that matches the breadth and ambition of the national curriculum. In most subjects, the curriculum is well sequenced so that pupils build their knowledge cumulatively over time. For example, in geography, older pupils can recall information about Borneo in detail. They use their prior knowledge to describe the country's location. In a small number of subjects, curriculum plans are not sufficiently personalised to meet the needs of the school. In these subjects, pupils find it more difficult to recall what they have learned. Leaders are aware of the need to further develop some curriculum areas.

The school prioritises reading. Pupils enjoy sharing stories in the 'reading nook' at playtimes. Staff know how to teach phonics well. The phonics programme begins with the youngest children. Teachers ensure that the books pupils read align with the sounds that they have been taught. Assessment is used well to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a result, pupils receive timely, focused interventions. Pupils are fluent and accurate readers by the time they leave school.

Teachers use technology well to present learning clearly and model tasks alongside pupils. This ensures that pupils are clear about what they are intended to learn. Teachers prioritise the teaching of the key vocabulary outlined in curriculum plans. However, staff sometimes miss opportunities to extend pupils' learning through discussions. This means that some pupils find it hard to talk about what they know and explain their thinking.

The behaviour of most pupils in lessons and at breaktimes is positive. Pupils understand the school's system of rewards and sanctions. However, some staff are

inconsistent in their expectations of how pupils should behave during lessons. A small number of pupils disrupt others with low-level negative behaviours. Some pupils, while not disrupting others, are not always actively engaged with their learning. This means that on occasions, some pupils do not learn the curriculum as well as leaders intend.

The school identifies, assesses and meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities successfully. A counsellor supports pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. The school has created safe spaces for pupils to use if they feel overwhelmed. These adaptations make a positive difference to pupils' learning, behaviour and well-being.

The early years environment is a warm and nurturing space. Leaders have implemented a well-planned and sequenced curriculum. The school ensures that children are prepared for Year 1. Staff are knowledgeable about the teaching of early mathematics. They ensure that children have enough practice to be confident in using and understanding numbers. Regular events, such as craft mornings and 'pjamarama', help establish positive relationships with parents.

Leaders have collaborated with receiving middle schools to plan the curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education. This ensures consistency across key stage 2. The school ensures that pupils learn about privacy and personal boundaries in an age-appropriate way. A recent visit by a Paralympian has inspired pupils. They know about the importance of treating people with disabilities fairly.

The trust has taken positive action to support the leadership capacity of the school. Members of the local governing board bring a high level of expertise to their roles. They assure themselves of the effectiveness of the school through regular monitoring visits. As a result, governors are able to provide a good balance of challenge and support for the headteacher.

Staff value the opportunities to work collaboratively with colleagues from other schools within the trust. They appreciate that school leaders consider their workload when introducing new initiatives. One staff member summed up the views of many by saying, 'We all work very hard but go home with a satisfied feeling at the end of the week.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The intent and ambitions of the curriculum are clear. However, curriculum plans have not been sufficiently personalised to meet the needs of the school in some subject areas. This leads to some inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum

and appropriateness of learning activities. The school should continue to develop the curriculum so that all plans meet the needs of the pupils.

- The school has ensured that curriculum planning includes a focus on learning selected vocabulary. However, many pupils struggle to talk about what they know and explain their thinking. The school should prioritise the development of oracy across the curriculum. It should ensure that all teachers have the requisite skills to promote oracy and discussion in the classroom.
- Some staff are inconsistent in their expectations of how pupils should behave. A small number of pupils disrupt others with low-level negative behaviours. Some pupils, while not disrupting others, are not always actively engaged with their learning. The school should ensure that all staff are consistent in terms of expectations of behaviour for learning.

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	146937
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10297464
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	65
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Carvin
CEO of the trust	Simon Taylor and Alice Witherow (Co-CEOs)
Headteacher	Andrew Hudson
Website	www.mickley.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Mickley First School converted to become an academy in September 2019. When its predecessor school, Mickley First School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Mickley First School is part of the Cheviot Learning Trust. The school joined the trust in September 2023.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher also lead Ovingham Church of England First School. Other leaders also work across the two schools.
- The school does not currently use any alternative education provision.

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.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff. Inspectors spoke with the chief executive officer of the Cheviot Learning Trust, the chair of the Cheviot Learning Trust and governors, including the chair of the local governing board.
- 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 carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about the curriculum in geography, history and religious education and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation shared by school leaders, including the school development plan, self-evaluation documents, reports from external advisers and minutes from meetings of the local governing board.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff and pupil online surveys and Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Jim Hindess, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mary Cook

His Majesty's Inspector

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