

Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School

Newfields, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 1SP

Inspection dates

26–27 April 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has driven improvements continuously since the previous inspection. As a result, pupils make consistently strong progress from their different starting points.
- Newly appointed subject leaders and an improved governing body support and challenge staff appropriately. They provide highly effective training to develop teaching.
- Phonics teaching and achievement have improved considerably. Well-trained staff deliver fast-paced, targeted lessons. Standards in phonics at the end of Year 1 have increased year on year.
- Recent changes to the way writing is taught have resulted in quick progress for most groups of pupils. Boys do not yet make the same level of accelerated progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- All groups of pupils now attend more regularly than in previous years.
- Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning make a very positive contribution to their progress. They are proud of their school and take pride in their work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported particularly well.
- Senior leaders set high expectations for staff and pupils. They lead by example, showing respect for all and creating a friendly and inclusive atmosphere where everyone is valued equally.
- Pupils are safe and quickly learn how to keep themselves safe in many different situations, including when using the internet.
- The new curriculum is more exciting and provides greater challenge for the most able pupils. More pupils now achieve the very highest standards compared to those seen nationally in reading and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress, especially those who are among the most able. Funding is used effectively to remove barriers that might hinder progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers in reading and mathematics. Their progress in writing is not as good.
- Children in the early years are making rapid progress. Most reach a good level of development by the end of Reception. Learning outside is not as effective as learning indoors.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the swift progress in writing that pupils have made recently by:
 - ensuring that teaching continues to inspire boys to write more extensively
 - helping pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in key stage 1 to make as much progress with their writing skills as they do in reading and mathematics.
- Continue to increase the good progress made by children in the early years by:
 - ensuring that all staff provide the very high standards of teaching demonstrated and expected by leaders
 - developing outdoor provision so that staff offer more opportunities for children to explore outside and accelerate learning in this area.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has driven improvements across the school with determination and vision over the past three years. Governors now have a far more effective role in setting expectations and raising standards. Together, the headteacher and governors have worked tirelessly to establish a highly inclusive learning environment where pupils thrive.
- Governors and senior leaders analyse information about the school carefully and robustly to make sure they have an accurate understanding of its performance. They form a strong team and share high aspirations for pupils. The school development plan is perceptive and clearly sets out what leaders are doing to improve pupils' outcomes. Leaders use the plan effectively to check that their actions are having the positive impact they intended.
- New subject and phase leaders support staff confidently and have improved teaching and learning considerably since the previous inspection. The members of the new senior leadership team provide excellent role models for other staff and demonstrate the very highest of teaching standards for others to follow. They use many different methods to check that pupils in every class make good progress.
- Strong leaders at all levels have made sure that teaching has improved across all subjects. The members of the leadership team monitor teaching and learning closely and use their observations to eradicate weak teaching. Staff have excellent access to support and training to increase their skills and knowledge. As a result, teaching now leads to pupils making good progress over time. Staff morale is high and all staff are committed to achieving the best outcomes for their pupils.
- Leaders have correctly recognised the key areas that need further development. For example, they have used assessment data to identify that pupils do not make as much progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics. Leaders have used scrutiny of pupils' books precisely to target and support the specific groups and individuals who are not achieving as well as they expected. A small number of boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in key stage 1 have not made progress as swiftly as others have in their writing.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum to help pupils make good progress with their academic skills and personal development. Pupils make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics skills and these subjects support strong learning in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in Years 3 and 4, pupils use their mathematics skills effectively to measure results in their science experiments. Pupils have many opportunities to extend their learning beyond school, including by attending trips off site and by talking to visitors who help make their learning more interesting. Staff also provide additional learning opportunities beyond the school day and during holidays. Pupils said they enjoyed football and film club as particular favourites.
- Staff promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning effectively, especially during class assemblies and in topic work where a range of faiths and societies are studied. Christian values underpin the whole ethos of the school and its curriculum, reflecting

the religious character of the school. Pupils quickly learn to listen to, respect and value the opinions of others even if they disagree. Staff provide many opportunities for pupils to discuss and debate during lessons and this builds up their tolerance and respect. Key stage 2 pupils worked in teams during the inspection to discuss and decide upon the best location to build a castle in their history topic. Pupils in Year 2 enjoyed finding out about Aboriginal art within their geography learning. Pupils quickly develop a good understanding of British values as a result of the lively and exciting curriculum.

- Leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to provide additional support for eligible pupils in lessons and to access the breakfast club. Some disadvantaged pupils receive support from teaching assistants who help accelerate progress in phonics, reading, writing and mathematics. These additional support groups are particularly successful in raising achievement in mathematics, phonics and reading.
- Leaders ensure that physical education (PE) and sports funding leads to improvements in opportunities and skills for all pupils. A specialist sports coach works alongside teachers. Fast-paced learning and high-energy lessons promote pupils' health and fitness in PE. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 persevered to improve their skills in tennis, demonstrating excellent focus and determination.
- Leaders are skilled in supporting pupils who have special educational needs and set high expectations for learning within this group. Governors check that funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used efficiently and improves their learning. Leaders are equally as keen to support the most able pupils in school. Consequently, recent results show a large increase in the proportion of pupils who reach the very highest of standards in reading and mathematics. Staff challenge the most able pupils in all subjects and especially in mathematics. For example, the most able pupils in Year 2 confidently explained their mathematical investigations, describing why they had chosen specific strategies and comparing the different methods of calculation used.
- Parents speak highly of the school. They appreciate the regular communication they receive and welcome the many invitations they have to be part of their child's learning.
- Leaders work with many other schools, institutions and professionals to help staff develop their teaching skills and to make sure assessments are accurate. The diocese supports new leaders very successfully, helping to hone and improve their skills, especially in monitoring progress. The local authority also assists the school by providing a school improvement partner who offers effective challenge and support to the headteacher.

Governance of the school

- Governors have increased the amount of challenge they provide to leaders since the previous inspection. They hold staff to account for the progress made by pupils more readily and monitor pupils' outcomes more robustly than previously.
- Governors recently undertook a skills audit to help identify areas where they needed additional expertise and recruited new members to fill any gaps. Individual governors take on responsibility for specific aspects of the school's development and work closely with staff to help check that expectations for progress are being met.

- Governors attend regular training to develop their knowledge and understanding. They provide detailed reports following their monitoring visits to the school and make astute plans to use additional funding effectively.
- Governors support improvements in teaching and learning successfully. They challenge weak teaching and are not afraid to make difficult decisions if needed. Governors make sure that performance management procedures are fair and robust. They link pay progression to improving outcomes for pupils and offer staff many opportunities for training.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors and leaders regularly check safeguarding policies and procedures. They provide frequent and effective training for staff so that skills and knowledge are up to date in this area.
- Staff and governors with designated responsibilities for safeguarding are highly skilled and experienced. They make sure that actions taken to safeguard pupils are prompt, appropriate and recorded carefully.
- Staff and governors have a good understanding and know how to respond when concerns arise. The school works in strong partnerships with parents and other professionals to ensure that pupils receive any support they need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and so it is now consistently good across the school. In some classes, it is better than good and pupils make accelerated progress. For example, pupils in Year 2 and 3 make very swift progress because teachers' planning is meticulous. In these classes, staff check pupils' understanding regularly within lessons and step in promptly to extend and deepen learning.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge across all areas of the curriculum. They introduce technical vocabulary skilfully so that pupils quickly understand and use the correct terms to explain and discuss their learning.
- The teaching of reading has improved rapidly. Staff are trained at depth to teach phonics effectively and those pupils who made a slower start in this area catch up well. Pupils work in small groups for phonics lessons and this allows staff to target their needs precisely. Teaching assistants make valuable contributions to the progress pupils make in phonics. Pupils enjoy reading and are encouraged to read at home as well as school.
- Staff question pupils' understanding adeptly. They make sure that pupils understand key learning points. Teachers explain ideas and concepts clearly and intervene with sensitivity to correct any of their pupils' misconceptions. Staff also help pupils to check their own work so they learn from any mistakes made and build up independence. During the inspection, this strategy was highly effective in mathematics when older pupils were solving mathematical problems linked to imaginary bank accounts. Pupils

worked cooperatively to double-check their calculations and self-corrected their answers using inverse methods.

- Teachers have increased opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills across many areas of the curriculum. As a result, pupils' writing has improved. Topic books show that pupils enjoy writing for many different purposes and in many subjects. For example, they use writing to explain their conclusions at the end of experiments or to persuade tourists to visit Australia.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons to engage and excite pupils' learning in all year groups. Year 1 staff particularly inspired their pupils to write detailed descriptions of a lost teddy for posters displayed around school. This imaginative idea captured pupils' interest and they produced good-quality work.
- Teachers and assistants challenge the most able pupils effectively in all subjects. Staff plan work that is more difficult for the most able pupils, ensuring they achieve as well as possible. For example, in Year 2 the most able pupils needed to use a wider range of grammar and punctuation than their peers, in order to extend their writing skills even further.
- Staff reflect thoughtfully on how to improve their teaching and use assessment information accurately. In English, boys write more frequently now and are beginning to make better progress. Improvements here are still at an early stage and staff know they need to provide regular opportunities to inspire boys to write more extensively.
- Teaching assistants offer good support to pupils in many areas of the curriculum. The most experienced teaching assistants lead small group activities of extremely high standards. Staff provide excellent support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and these pupils currently make accelerated progress in mathematics and reading. However, some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in key stage 1 do not make as much progress with their writing skills.
- Staff use homework imaginatively to engage pupils' enthusiasm. In Year 2, pupils were inspired to learn key facts about Australia during the Easter holidays before they started this topic in geography. Pre-learning of this kind helps stimulate interest and makes sure that pupils have a good basic knowledge as a foundation for their studies.
- Staff set high expectations and pupils respond positively by trying their best. Teachers work closely with parents so that they can help and motivate their children's learning beyond school. Parents praise staff for the extra support they offer in meetings, open days and workshops.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe and enjoy being at school. Staff create a friendly and harmonious atmosphere where all pupils are treated fairly and with respect. Pupils say that their teachers make learning fun and give them lots of support with learning.

- Teachers promote healthy lifestyles well, especially healthy eating which is a key theme in science and other topics. Pupils agree that school lunches are healthy and know how important it is to eat fruit regularly. Younger pupils could explain that calcium makes their bones and teeth strong. Physical education lessons, energetic playtimes and sports clubs after school ensure that pupils take exercise regularly.
- Spiritual development and moral values are key features of the school's curriculum. During the inspection, each class studied 'God's gifts' as an assembly topic. Year 4 pupils commented maturely about each of their talents after hearing a Bible story linked to this theme. Meanwhile, the very youngest children talked confidently about the physical gifts they thought God provided.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe in different situations, including when on the internet. They know they must not disclose personal information to strangers online. Pupils remember important messages from visitors such as the local police who helped them to learn about stranger danger and the need to be sensible near railway lines.
- Staff know pupils well as individuals and support families effectively. Staff work closely with many other professionals to keep all pupils safe, especially those who have challenging lives outside of school. Pupils show kindness to one another. They understand that sometimes other pupils may be facing difficulties with their learning, life and behaviour and try to help when they can.
- Parents and staff who completed online questionnaires as part of the inspection agreed overwhelmingly that pupils are safe, looked after and behave well in school. Pupils agreed this too. They said sometimes pupils have disagreements but bullying was rare. They explained that leaders deal with any incidents promptly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour has continued to improve because of the high expectations set by staff and leaders. Pupils are polite and respectful to all staff, including lunchtime supervisors, sports coaches and teaching assistants. They conduct themselves sensibly around school, in lessons and during playtimes.
- Pupils take a pride in the presentation of their work, as demonstrated in their books and attractive displays around school. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their sensible behaviour make very valuable contributions to the good progress made.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. Leaders take assertive actions to work with parents and carers if their children do not attend school on a regular basis. Many pupils attend the school's breakfast club, including those who are disadvantaged, and because of this provision, the attendance for disadvantaged pupils continues to improve.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Historically, pupils have not achieved as well as they could over time. However, due to the robust and resilient actions of leaders at all levels across the school, pupils' progress has improved and is now good.

- Results in 2016 improved considerably at the end of key stage 1. In reading, writing and mathematics, attainment was above the national average. The proportion of pupils working at greater depth in all three subjects was also higher than seen nationally. There has been a marked increase in the proportion of most-able pupils meeting the highest standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Because phonics teaching has improved in the early years, pupils have a 'flying start' in learning to read in Year 1. They go on to reach much higher standards than achieved previously. For the past three years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has increased and it is now above average.
- In 2016, pupils achieved well above the standards reached nationally, with boys in particular outperforming other boys across the country.
- School assessment data for current pupils and inspection evidence show that pupils' outcomes have continued to improve this year. Pupils' achievement has continued to rise. This includes pupils' achievement in lower key stage 2.
- Pupils are currently making good progress across the school from their different starting points in all areas of the curriculum. Many groups make progress that is better than good. This is because of stronger teaching over time.
- In 2016, fewer disadvantaged pupils than seen nationally were working at expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. However, data shows that currently, disadvantaged pupils are making good gains in their learning because of effective teaching and additional support offered through the pupil premium.
- Throughout the school, the most able pupils make good progress in all subjects. An increasing number of most-able disadvantaged pupils are also now working at higher levels across the curriculum. This group are doing well because of additional funding which has helped raise their achievement. More disadvantaged pupils are now among the most able in school, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make swift progress in all areas of the curriculum due to highly effective teaching and support from teaching assistants. This is particularly helping pupils to catch up in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2. Currently, in key stage 1, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in reading and mathematics but their progress is not as quick in writing.
- In 2016, boys achieved well at the end of key stage 1 in reading and mathematics. However, fewer boys were working at greater depth in writing than seen nationally. School data and a scrutiny of work in current pupils' books show that boys are making good progress with their writing. However, boys are not yet making the accelerated progress in writing that they make in reading and mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- Currently, children in the early years make good progress from their different starting points. Staff have improved teaching and support for children's speech and language

recently so that far more children are now on track to reach a good level of development.

- In previous years, staffing instability has had a negative impact on children's outcomes and assessments have not always been accurate. The new early years leader promptly introduced a variety of procedures to secure robust assessments. She checks the work of other staff regularly to ensure that they all make accurate judgements about children's progress.
- Staff know the children very well as individuals. They use detailed observations to plan each child's next steps carefully. As a result, staff challenge a higher number of the most able children appropriately and they make faster progress.
- Staff are skilled practitioners who intervene in a timely and sensitive manner to ask questions that deepen children's thinking. For example, while working in the mathematics area, the team leader asked children to explain how they knew their answers were correct. Children needed time to think about their response and the teacher made sure not to rush them. Less experienced staff are not yet as highly skilled as their team leader.
- Phonics teaching is a clear strength. Even the youngest children are beginning to recognise letters of the alphabet and match these correctly to the sounds they make. Staff pronounce letter sounds precisely and children copy their excellent role models.
- Teachers provide a vibrant curriculum to ignite children's interests, especially in the Reception class. Their teacher had shared an exciting discovery on the school's social media page over the Easter holidays. Her post explained that a large rock had landed in the playground. On returning to school, children shared many imaginative ideas about where the rock had originated and this triggered their keen interest in space.
- Staff offer many opportunities for children to increase their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children studied the Hindu festival of Diwali with interest. Lively teaching helped them remember important facts about this celebration.
- Teachers keep parents well informed about their children's progress. Parents contribute to their child's assessments by sharing important information from home during meetings with staff. Parents enjoy attending sessions where children 'show and tell' adults about their most recent learning.
- The early years leader targets areas for improvement adeptly and motivates staff to address any weaknesses. Boys' interest in writing developed well because of targeted staff training. Staff provide opportunities that are more imaginative for boys to write in all areas of the classroom now and progress in writing has increased.
- Vigilant staff keep children safe indoors and outside. They make sure they meet all statutory requirements and safeguarding is effective.
- The early years leader has correctly identified that children need more opportunities to learn outside. With her support, staff are keen to accelerate learning in the outside areas.

School details

Unique reference number	122271
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10031968

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	First school
School category	Voluntary-aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joyce Guthrie
Headteacher	Gary Hilton
Telephone number	01289 306 170
Website	www.stmarysfirst.org
Email address	admin@st-maryscofe.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 March 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported through the pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- Pupil mobility has increased in the past two years with a higher number of pupils joining the school at times other than in Nursery and Reception.
- The school operates a breakfast club for pupils.

- It is a voluntary-aided school of religious character. A section 48 inspection of religious education was last carried out in December 2015.
- The school has provision for children in the early years that starts from the term after they turn three years of age. Children attend part time in the Nursery and full time in the Reception class.
- A number of staff are new to the school since the previous inspection and many leaders are recently appointed to their leadership posts. Two staff are newly or recently qualified.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the school. The inspector undertook joint observations with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher. In addition, the inspector checked pupils' books, viewed online learning journals in the early years and listened to pupils read.
- The inspector met with a number of governors, including the chair of the governing body and the vice-chair. The inspector held meetings with pupils, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders. The inspector spoke, by telephone, to a representative of the diocese and the school's improvement partner appointed by the local authority. The inspector also met with an officer from the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's evaluation of its own performance, information on current pupils' progress and monitoring documentation.
- Inspectors scrutinised the spending of funding for disadvantaged pupils and primary school PE and sports funding. Records of attendance and behaviour were taken into consideration as well as documents related to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 16 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and feedback from parents who completed earlier surveys conducted by school leaders.
- The inspector took account of 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and talked to staff during the inspection about their views of the school.

Inspection team

Anne Humble, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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