

Acklington Church of England Controlled First School

Acklington, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE65 9BW

Inspection dates 2 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The passion and drive of the headteacher ensures that all pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium, make good progress and learn effectively.
- Children enter school with starting points that vary from below average to above average. Speech and language skills are often underdeveloped and a few have complex learning and development needs.
- Pupils' attainment by the time they leave school is typically above average overall. Attainment is a little higher in English than mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and thrive in the happy, friendly family atmosphere. They behave well and are considerate and polite.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have secure expectations of what pupils of all backgrounds can achieve. Classroom support is effective and thorough checking of pupils' progress ensures that any slips or gaps in their learning are promptly addressed.
- The good curriculum provides increasingly rich opportunities for learning. Outstanding spiritual development opportunities successfully encourage pupils to reflect with fascination and curiosity on the world around them.
- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Monitoring and evaluation is firmly directed towards the impact of actions taken to improve the quality of learning and boost achievement, including for those eligible for pupil premium. The school demonstrates a good capacity to secure further improvements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Mathematical skills are not developed well enough, as opportunities are sometimes missed to practise skills and stretch thinking even more.
- Pupils show interest in their learning, although teaching does not always relentlessly promote high levels of engagement, especially for boys.
- Marking does not always give clear guidance for improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 5 lessons of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons, scrutinised samples of pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, members of the governing body including parent governors, school staff including leaders and managers and the local authority school improvement lead adviser.
- No responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were available in the planning of the inspection.
- The inspector observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation including the school's own records of pupils' current progress, monitoring and evaluation documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Acklington is a much smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is higher than the national average and increasing significantly.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is broadly average.
- The proportions supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need are high compared to the national average.
- All pupils are of White British heritage.
- A higher than average and increasing proportion of pupils joins or leaves the school at other than the usual times.
- The school works in close collaboration with local schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding, by:
 - ensuring that teaching consistently demands high levels of engagement and commitment, particularly of boys, to bring about even higher achievement
 - extending the thought-provoking practice that is present in the school to increase the proportion of teaching that inspires and excites pupils' thinking
 - increasing the opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in all subjects
 - making sure that pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve to the next level.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good overall, including for those eligible for pupil premium. An interesting range of experiences enables children of all backgrounds to learn well, including the increasing number joining at other than the usual time.
- Children enter school with variable starting points for their age. Children settle quickly into the routines of a mixed-age class developing early confidence, self-control and independence. The good progress in Reception, especially in their communication skills, continues into Key Stage 1. Attainment can be variable as it is difficult to make comparisons with the national average in view of the small cohorts. Typically, at the end of Year 2 it is broadly average. By the end of Year 4, overall attainment is above average and rising. Unvalidated 2012 assessment information reveals that the positive action taken to improve early reading and writing is effective, although mathematical skills are less well-developed.
- When presented with a problem to solve, older pupils are increasingly confident to consider the options, explain their solutions and justify their thinking. Imaginative approaches and probing questions help to enliven learning, such as when pupils are challenged to use alliteration to make a 'silly sandwich' poem. At times opportunities are missed to demand even more and promote higher levels of engagement, especially of boys.
- The increasingly imaginative use of themes and first-hand experiences captures interests and motivates pupils to achieve well. Well-thought out activities challenge thinking and encourage skills to be practised, although opportunities to apply numeracy skills in all subjects are occasionally missed.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress, because careful, in-depth progress checks pinpoint individual needs and any gaps in their learning. Support, including that from expert support agencies, such as for pupils with hearing impairment, is very effective.
- Attainment in reading by the end of Year 2 is a little above average. A strong focus to the teaching of letter and sound relationships, making sense of new words and using reading to discover and learn is systematically quickening pupils' progress and boosting enjoyment.

The quality of teaching is good

- In discussions, parents describe their appreciation of the improved quality of teaching since the previous inspection, although a very few parents did express the view that progress could be even faster. Staff enjoy excellent relationships with pupils which helps to create a positive climate for learning. Pupils respond enthusiastically and energetically, although occasionally the level of engagement and concentration of boys could be higher.
- Progress is fastest when:
 - learning objectives are clear and thought-provoking approaches relentlessly build on their earlier learning
 - activities are carefully matched to pupils' age, ability and need ensuring that all can achieve success
 - problem-solving challenges hold interest and demand well-explained logical solutions
 - skilful questioning stretches pupils' imagination and thinking
 - helpful and accurate marking ensures that pupils know how well they have done.
- When progress in lessons slows a little:
 - expectations of what pupils can achieve are insufficiently high and opportunities are missed to promote and reinforce resilience and hard work
 - classrooms routines are not consistently adhered to, allowing the pace of learning to slip
 - opportunities are missed to use marking to identify clear steps for improvement.

- Well-organised activities are provided for pupils to work independently or share ideas with a partner, particularly when finding solutions to specific problems in active, practical ways. Pupils' excellent spiritual development is promoted in creative and interesting ways, such as when reflecting upon the composition of a Buddhist prayer for animals.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, good opportunities are provided for children to investigate, explore and plan their own learning. Good use is made of the outdoor area in increasingly inventive ways. For example, staff use the innovative approaches of Forest Schools initiative to inspire children's thinking and learning when outdoors.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- High quality of care, positive staff role models, clear boundaries for conduct and the effective use of praise and encouragement, contribute well to pupils feeling happy and safe. Almost all parents appreciate that their children are happy and safe. The pupils' good behaviour, including those potentially vulnerable pupils, is evident in their keenness and energetic approaches to school life.
- The mutual respect between adults and pupils is apparent in their friendly and considerate relationships. All staff work hard to ensure that all pupils are included and experience no barriers to achieving success. The school works consistently to promote to pupils the value and benefits that above average attendance brings, enhancing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils report that they feel safe and happy in school, because in their view, 'teachers are always watching'. They state that there are very few incidents of bullying or inappropriate behaviour. Their conversations reveal a good grasp of what constitutes bullying and they speak confidently about how they can deal with any worries they may have.
- Pupils value the regular guidance they receive in assemblies to respect difference and resolve disagreements sensitively. Pupils are confident that staff are always on hand to share a worry or concern. They demonstrate a really good grasp of how to avoid risk and danger.
- Arrangements to support children whose needs are sometimes complex and make them potentially vulnerable or who arrive and leave at short notice are effective. This includes targeted use of specialist support agencies for pupils and their families. Parents appreciate the very good quality of care that staff provide for their children.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's vision and determination for this small village school has led to marked improvements in the quality of learning. She receives whole-hearted support from the staff, who share her ambition. Priorities for improvement have been tackled with thoroughness and sensitivity. Improvements continually build upon school strengths.
- Systems to check on pupils' progress are precise and robust, underpinning the school's accurate self-evaluation. Practice is very effective in identifying the needs of those pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs. Their provision is carefully planned ensuring that they make the same progress as that of their classmates. Staff work hard to promote equality of opportunity to ensure that there are no barriers to pupils' progress and to eradicate discrimination.
- Effective performance management has significantly improved the quality of learning since the previous inspection. Good use is made of professional development to enhance staff skills. This includes effective collaborative working with local schools. Management roles have been distributed successfully across a small staff ensuring effective day-to-day management of responsibilities.
- The good curriculum provides a wide range of first-hand experiences which are used imaginatively to enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, pupils have visited a nearby dairy farm which manufactures ice-cream from the milk produced. Despite the

constraints of a small village school a wide range of enrichment activities, such as visiting the Roman fort at Arbeia, add to the richness and enjoyment of pupils' learning. This contributes successfully to the pupils' excellent spiritual and good moral, social and cultural development.

- The school engages parents well and they enjoy frequent opportunities to be involved in their children's learning and development. Excellent partnership working with the local village and church enhances the quality of pupils' learning well.
- Safeguarding meets requirements with much that is best practice adding significantly to the quality of care and support for pupils of all backgrounds.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- shares the vision and ambition of the headteacher and possesses a secure grasp on the strategic direction of the school, such as exploiting the benefits of closer links with local schools
- holds the school to account in open and positive ways, such as targeting pupil premium support effectively
- demonstrates an accurate grasp of school strengths and areas for continued improvement
- makes effective use of performance management to improve the quality of learning
- works collaboratively with local authority officers, who provide light touch support for this good school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122270
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	406083

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	18
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Rowntree
Headteacher	Effie Fenton
Date of previous school inspection	27-28 September 2010
Telephone number	01670 760335
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@acklington.northumberland.sch.uk

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