

Choppington Primary School

Eastgate, Choppington, Northumberland NE62 5RR

Inspection dates

6–7 December 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently strong enough in securing good progress for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics over time. Tasks for pupils do not precisely match their previous learning.
- The school's transition to becoming a primary school has not been completely successful. Leaders and governors were not able to tackle weaknesses in teaching in key stage 2 in time to prevent underachievement in Year 6.
- Leaders' plans for improvement do not identify precisely the skills, knowledge and understanding pupils need to improve.
- The progress for disadvantaged pupils lags behind those of others in recent months.
- Most-able pupils, including those who are also disadvantaged, are not consistently challenged. Their needs are not given sufficient attention.
- Some pupils rely too heavily on teachers and other adults in their learning. A significant number lack self-confidence and resilience to persevere when they find tasks difficult.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils to complete their homework regularly.
- The quality of provision is uneven in the early years because adults miss opportunities to extend children's ideas.
- The behaviour of a small minority of pupils in Year 1 and the early years was extremely disruptive last year. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions was high.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has set about making improvements with vigour. Along with her senior leadership team, she has been resilient in tackling a difficult set of circumstances and calmly making best use of available support.
- The school's evaluation of the quality of teaching is candid and generally results in effective action. Leaders have halted the decline in pupils' progress.
- The school has a strong safeguarding culture. Adults are adept at spotting risks and securing appropriate provision for pupils. Staff have a passionate commitment to supporting vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders have been successful in improving attendance, so that it is now above the national average, with few differences between different groups of pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that assessment information is used consistently well to build on pupils' previous learning so that emerging differences in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others are diminished
 - developing strategies to extend the reading skills of most-able pupils
 - developing and deepening pupils' mathematical understanding through activities which allow them to apply their skills, problem-solve in a range of contexts, reason and justify their answers
 - ensuring that the quality of pupils' writing is consistent across all subjects
 - developing a consistent approach to homework to support pupils in developing positive attitudes to learning.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - adjusting the school improvement planning so that it clearly identifies the skills, knowledge and understanding pupils need to improve, precisely what success will look like and how it will be measured
 - reducing the number of fixed-term exclusions.
 - developing adults' skills in the Nursery so that provision matches the strong practice in the Reception class
 - reviewing the curriculum and teaching approaches to develop pupils' resilience and self confidence
 - developing arrangements to share out the responsibilities for leading on key subjects.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not been fully successful in ensuring the school's smooth transition from a first school to a primary school. Results for the school's first Year 6 cohort fell short of leaders' and governors' ambitions and aspirations. The quality of teaching and learning declined last year and recent improvements have not had time to secure pupils' good progress.
- The school had a difficult time last year. The very poor behaviour of a minority of younger pupils combined with staff absence and some weak teaching in key stage 2 combined to create a perfect storm. Senior leaders and governors were aware of the weaknesses in teaching, but were not able to secure improvements with sufficient speed to support the complex needs of the small cohort of pupils in Year 6. Nor were they able to prevent unevenness in the progress pupils made in other year groups, including in key stage 1 and the early years.
- The school's use of the pupil premium did not have the desired effect on the progress pupils made in the early years or in key stage 2 last year. For example, investment in mathematics resources did not result in the expected improvement in disadvantaged pupils' mathematics skills. The current strategy is much stronger in ensuring that disadvantaged pupils receive more focused and precise support to overcome their barriers to learning. There is evidence that these pupils are currently making better progress and are back on track to make the same progress as others, as they have in previous years.
- The headteacher has tackled difficult staffing issues and restructured the leadership team. The new leadership team is a close team and has already stabilised the school and new staff have been appointed to key stage 2. Senior leaders have made sure that gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding have been diagnosed and teaching is designed to make sure pupils catch up. The senior leaders observe learning regularly and check the quality of pupils' work in their books. They are now quick to identify where teaching requires improvement and take appropriate steps to support or challenge teachers. As a result, current progress is improving.
- Teachers' performance is carefully monitored and training is closely linked to emerging strengths or areas which need to improve. Although teaching is not yet good, this practice is supporting the recent improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and giving teachers increasing confidence in their work. Performance management systems provide clarity to staff about how their work contributes to improvements in pupils' achievements.
- The school's curriculum offers pupils a wide range of experiences. Leaders have taken appropriate advice from other primary schools to make sure that the key stage 2 curriculum covers the correct content. The curriculum in key stage 1 and 2 prioritises building pupils' confidence in gaining basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there is not sufficient emphasis on pupils developing more sophisticated skills and grappling with complex challenges. Much of the leadership of key subjects falls on the shoulders of the headteacher as new staff settle in. Leaders are aware that this is

not sustainable.

- Visits and visitors add an extra dimension to the curriculum and help pupils to appreciate and celebrate difference. For example, pupils have toured a range of different religious places of worship in Newcastle. Consequently, pupils are developing tolerance and respect for others.
- Leaders have worked hard to make sure the large number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early, and that individual reviews of how well they are doing are carried out in a timely fashion. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities frequently have significant needs, predominantly with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Staff are trained effectively and are skilled in offering effective support and guidance; consequently, the special educational needs funding is used effectively.
- Physical education and sport premium funding is used effectively. Leaders have made sure that staff confidence in teaching physical education has grown and, as a result, a wider range of activities is taught across all the key stages. A further indication of success is that more pupils are joining clubs and taking part in team competition. For example, during the inspection key stage 2 pupils enjoyed taking part in a gymnastics festival.
- The quality of the support from the local authority has been variable. The school has benefited from skilled support from the behaviour support team in tackling some very challenging behaviour of younger pupils, but this has been inconsistent. The school improvement partner has worked with the school in producing a school improvement plan. However, it is weak and does not reflect leaders' and governors' clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Governance of the school

- The work of the governing body is effective. Governors recognise that improvements are required. They listen carefully and act on advice.
- In their quest for improvement, new governors have been appointed with appropriate skills and experience. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that they ask searching questions of leaders. For example, following governors' questions about the progress of most-able pupils, leaders improved their tracking of this group.
- Governors know how the pupil premium funding has been spent. They are assiduous in ensuring that they are kept informed about the impact it has on unpicking barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school and safeguarding systems are robust. Close collaboration with external agencies and effective communication within the school ensure that the safety of pupils, especially the significant number in vulnerable circumstances, are at the heart of the school's work. Staff training is highly effective so that adults are confident in dealing with frequent and difficult issues as

they arise. Consequently, pupils are kept safe and secure.

- Senior staff are dogged in keeping a track on pupils who arrive and leave the school within a short period of time. Highly alert to the potential for children to go missing from education, leaders go to great lengths to gain the trust of families and have a wide network of support. Leaders ensure risks posed to and by pupils who have identified behaviour difficulties are detailed and appropriate.
- Risk is assessed appropriately, including the risk posed by extremism and radicalisation. Crucially, leaders have made sure that staff are confident in discussing difficult topics, so that pupils feel able discuss their ideas and thoughts in a safe environment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. The decline in the quality of teaching last year led to dips in pupils' progress and a weak set of results for Year 6. A consequence of this is that pupils have not attained high enough standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The quality of teaching has improved significantly this term but not enough to eradicate inconsistencies.
- Teachers do not consistently use assessment information effectively to build on the skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils already have. Teachers generally provide tasks to meet the needs of three broad ability ranges for much of the time, but there are also times when pupils of all abilities complete the same work. This is not challenging enough for the most able and those of middle ability. This aspect of teaching is stronger in key stage 1.
- Most-able pupils, most of whom are also disadvantaged, are not consistently challenged to deepen their thinking and extend their skills. For example, most-able readers in Year 6 have good skills; they can read clearly with strong intonation and tackle unfamiliar words well. However, teachers do not pay enough attention to how most-able pupils can extend their skills or introduce more challenging texts.
- The teaching of phonics has improved over time, but the proportion reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check varies from year to year. Nevertheless, pupils use their skills effectively to sound out words and are gaining increasing confidence and enjoyment in their reading. Less-able readers are keen to have a go with unfamiliar texts, but not with full understanding.
- The teaching of mathematics is variable across the school. Teachers are skilled in identifying gaps in pupils' learning and planning tasks to help them catch up. However, not enough time is spent on tasks that will deepen pupils' understanding. For example, pupils carry out repeated calculations, without the opportunity to work out how and why the method works. There are some examples of teachers offering the most-able pupils exciting challenges which they respond to eagerly. This approach is beginning to gain momentum.
- Pupils are biddable and have a good relationship with their teachers, but they are heavily reliant on adults to cajole and encourage them to complete their work. Occasionally, teachers do not move learning on quickly enough when pupils have

grasped a concept because some pupils give up too easily when the work is difficult.

- Teachers have inconsistent expectations of pupils about the amount and frequency of homework they should complete. They have had more success in establishing consistent patterns of reading at home and good routines in bringing books back to school.
- Teachers are tackling pupils' stamina in writing at length and pupils' writing across the school is improving. Pupils' writing is not of the same quality in subjects such as science or topic work as it is in literacy. Pupils say they enjoy learning and they have noticed marked improvements in teaching this year, remarking on how they have improved their skills quickly.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Teachers know the pupils' needs and adapt tasks so that they make progress and develop pride in their achievements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are developing more positive attitudes to learning. A significant number of pupils experience turmoil in their life and the school is working effectively with them to overcome their tendency to give up when tasks become difficult.
- Pupils are developing sound personal skills, but some lack confidence, finding it difficult to make eye contact or hold conversations with adults.
- Pupils are generally respectful and polite to adults and to each other, but do not always maintain these values out of school.
- Teachers take opportunities to debate tricky subjects as the need arises and pupils say that they can turn to any adult if anything is troubling them. This approach helps teachers discuss any emerging prejudicial ideas with pupils as the pupils are forming their views.
- The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is dynamic and responds to pupils' needs and changing circumstances. For example, leaders are considering how they can best support key stage 2 girls in raising their awareness of risks posed in the local community.
- The school is passionate and caring towards the high number of vulnerable pupils who are well supported by the wrap-around-care the school provides in liaison with a range of external agencies.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils behave appropriately in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. On the playground

they are generous with their friends. They look out for anyone who is on their own and draw them into their games. Classrooms are calm and pupils report that this is typically the case.

- A few younger pupils with identified behaviour difficulties had a significant impact on behaviour last year. The school struggled to manage some of the challenging behaviour, but staff persevered, sought the help of external advisers and found solutions. Some pupils have made marked improvements in their behaviour while others have made a successful transition to more appropriate provision. The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly compared with the same period last year.
- Pupils understand the different forms bullying can take and know the damage it can do. They are confident that staff take any occasional name-calling or unpleasant behaviour seriously and will act swiftly. Pupils explained that a recent 'anti-bullying' week had helped them to appreciate the importance of taking action if they see anyone else being bullied.
- Staff have worked hard with families and the community to promote good attendance and punctuality. This has paid off because pupils have a strong understanding of why attendance is important. Pupils' attendance is above average. The number of pupils who have been persistently absent has been above the national average, particularly for pupils who enter and leave the school within a short period of time. The school's records show that this is reducing.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because the amount of progress that pupils are making across each year group in a range of different subjects declined last year. The school's information shows that this is improving this term, but the impact of some weak teaching and teachers' absence last year is still apparent.
- The results for the school's first Year 6 were disappointing. The cohort was very small and it is not possible to evaluate how well different groups of pupils did. Nevertheless, overall progress in reading and spelling was not good enough. Progress in mathematics and writing was particularly weak.
- In 2016, most pupils in key stage 1 achieved the expected level of understanding in reading, writing and mathematics, but none achieved a higher level of understanding. Girls did not do as well as boys in reading and mathematics. The number of pupils who were not disadvantaged at the end of key stage 1 was too small to make comparisons possible.
- The work that pupils have completed since September confirms that pupils' skills in writing and mathematics have improved significantly. Many pupils are now making good progress in these subjects, especially in key stage 1. Pupils in key stage 2 are quickly making up the ground they lost last year because of weak teaching, but they have not caught up and they still have a long way to go. Consequently, not all pupils are adequately prepared for the move to secondary school.
- Across the school, the most able pupils, most of whom are also disadvantaged, are not making progress towards achieving a greater level of understanding in reading, writing

and mathematics. This is because teachers are not offering sufficient challenge to promote deeper thinking and getting pupils to grapple with difficult problems.

- The current progress of disadvantaged pupils, who account for the majority of pupils, is strengthening and keeping pace with the smaller proportion of other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school has focused on gaining ground lost last year in reading, writing and mathematics to good effect, but the progress pupils make in other subjects such as science and topic work is weaker.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are currently keeping pace with others because the support they get from teachers and other adults is tightly focused on specific skills and knowledge.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The majority of children enter the Nursery with skills, knowledge and abilities which are below those typical for their age. This varies from year to year. Children's personal, social and emotional development is generally the weaker element.
- Two-year-old children quickly settle down into a routine; they play alongside others and join in singing songs and rhymes. This helps them to extend their vocabulary, for example learning the days of the week and naming feelings, such as 'happy'.
- Additional funding has been used thoughtfully to improve resources and support adults' training. When children are guided by adults in small groups, they maintain their engagement. However, this is not consistent for the two- and three-year olds, because adults working with this age group are less skilled at knowing when and how to intervene successfully to further children's learning.
- In the Reception classes, there is a rich environment which supports pupils' writing and reading skills. Children take great delight in improving their skills and learning to do things for themselves. Parents also report an improvement in children's independence when their child first starts school.
- The number of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception dipped last year and is now below the provisional national average, having previously been above the national average in 2015, and well below in 2014. This spiky profile is due in some part to the variation from year to year in the skills and knowledge with which children enter the school. Nevertheless, the extent to which children are prepared for the move into Year 1 is inconsistent.
- Children are kind to each other and typically try to follow instructions carefully. They are developing a good understanding of rules and the consequences of breaking rules.
- Senior leaders have taken decisive action to admit two-year-olds to the school as an important strategy for supporting disadvantaged children and their families. This is paying dividends in helping children to understand rules and routines, interact more confidently with others and develop a better quality of language.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 122180 |
| Local authority | Northumberland |
| Inspection number | 10019298 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 106 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Kieran Ball |
| Headteacher | Hilda Blythe |
| Telephone number | 01670 823197 |
| Website | www.choppington.northumberland.sch.uk |
| Email address | admin@choppington.northumberland.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 28–29 November 2011 |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school became a primary school in 2014.
- There is provision for two-year-old children. Twelve children currently attend the 'Little Learners' provision.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than the national average.

- Since the previous inspection, the deputy headteacher has left the school and there have been significant changes in staffing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in key stage 2 lessons and made some short visits to classrooms in key stage 1 and the early years. The headteacher jointly observed lessons with the lead inspector.
- The inspector listened to a range of pupils read and reviewed the work in pupils' books.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break was observed.
- The inspector talked informally to pupils in lessons and around the school and held formal meetings with pupils from across key stage 2.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders and class teachers. In addition to this, the inspector met with members of the local governing body, a group of staff as well as staff responsible for safeguarding and attendance. The inspector also met two representatives from the local authority and had telephone conversations with a governor and the headteacher of a local pupil referral unit.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, school improvement planning and documents monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The inspector also looked at minutes of the governing body meetings, the school's own policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- The inspector took into account the views of parents during the inspection, as well as 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own survey of parents' views.
- The inspector took into account the views of the staff throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Joan Hewitt, lead inspector

Senior Her Majesty's Inspector

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