

Acomb First School

Bishops Hill, Main Street, Acomb, Hexham, Northumberland NE46 4PL

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2018

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

- Leaders and governors of this very small village school are highly ambitious for all pupils. They ensure that the happiness and success of each child are at the heart of the school.
- Effective support from the local authority and a partnership with a similar school have ensured rapid improvements.
- Action following a review of governance has resulted in a strong and skilful governing body. Governors now have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are effective in holding leaders to account and offer practical support and advice to leaders.
- Teaching and learning are good across the school. Teachers have high expectations for learning and behaviour. They plan interesting activities and make good use of well-chosen resources to stimulate pupils' learning.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality and presentation of pupils' work are generally of a high standard. However, teachers do not consistently ensure that the spellings taught are used independently in pupils' work.
- Pupils, staff, governors, parents and carers are very supportive of the headteacher and the upward direction of the school's improvement journey.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and across the school. Pupils are polite and courteous to all adults and have very positive attitudes to learning. Their attendance is in line with national averages and punctuality is good. Staff provide good pastoral care to promote pupils' welfare effectively. Safeguarding is effective.
- Good leadership, teaching and learning with a range of well-planned learning opportunities are enabling children in the early years to make good progress in all areas of learning. Their behaviour is good and they are kept safe
- Pupils enjoy the broad curriculum, which is enhanced by a wide range of trips, forest school activities, clubs and other events.
- The assessment and tracking system for reading, writing and mathematics used to check individual pupils' progress is well understood by all. However, the tracking and assessment of foundation subjects are new and not yet sufficiently refined to fully support teachers' planning in these subjects to ensure that all pupils make strong and sustained progress in every subject.
- Teachers build upon pupils' earlier learning effectively and manage their classes well. However, pupils need to be given more opportunities to talk about their understanding in mathematics and reason about their answers.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and thereby further improve the standards pupils reach, by ensuring that:
 - the tracking of foundation subjects is refined to support teachers in planning to ensure that there is strong and sustained progress in all subjects
 - every opportunity is used to allow pupils to talk about their understanding in mathematics to enable them to deepen their understanding
 - spelling is taught consistently well across the school, enabling pupils to improve the accuracy of their writing in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The highly motivated leaders and governors place the needs of the pupils at the centre of their decisions, ensuring that their aims and values are at the heart of the school.
- Staff, governors and parents are very supportive of the rapid improvements the headteacher has brought about in creating a happy and vibrant learning community.
- Leaders reacted promptly and effectively to bring about the improvements recommended in the previous inspection, for example by refining school improvement planning so that there are clear lines of accountability, strict time frames and sufficient detail about expected impact and outcomes. The improvements in these plans have ensured that, even in the absence of the headteacher, leaders had a clear picture of the areas where improvements should be made. The skills of leaders across the wider curriculum have also been improved, resulting in effective monitoring and evaluating. The assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in creative and foundation subjects, however, are not refined sufficiently to ensure strong and sustained progress for all pupils.
- Leaders and governors are driving improvements in teaching and learning forward through high-quality training for staff, support from the local authority and effective partnership working. This has led to consistently good teaching across the school.
- Pupils enjoy the broad curriculum which is designed to make sure that it provides many varied opportunities for pupils to benefit from, including visitors to school, a wide range of trips, such as visits to Woodhorn Museum and Cragside, and forest school activities. The curriculum is enhanced by a suitably wide range of after-school clubs.
- School displays and pupils' work reflect the opportunities pupils have to develop their understanding of British heritage and culture. The school prepares pupils well for their life in modern Britain.
- Leaders at all levels place great emphasis on the care and well-being of pupils. There is a broad range of enrichment activities in place to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to celebrate festivals from a variety of faiths and pupils undertake fundraising activities for charities.
- Leaders use the extra funding for primary physical education (PE) and sport effectively. The school has sought the expertise of specialist teachers to add to teachers' skills and improve the quality of teaching in PE. Pupils are participating well in the increasing range of sporting activities that are on offer.
- Leaders make good use of funding for disadvantaged pupils by using it to provide extra support for the individuals who need it. This ensures that they catch up quickly. Coaching and mentoring enable disadvantaged pupils to achieve in line with or above other pupils.
- Parents who spoke with the inspector or who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are overwhelmingly positive in their praise for all aspects of the school. They said that their children are taught well and are making good progress. The vast majority said that their children are happy and feel safe at school.

- The coordinator for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities ensures that additional funding is used very well. In-class support and extra small-group sessions are carefully targeted. Staff review pupils' learning carefully. As a result, the majority of these pupils make good progress in English and mathematics from their starting points.

Governance of the school

- The committed and knowledgeable governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors are involved at a practical and strategic level, offering support and challenge to staff, pupils and parents.
- Several new governors have recently joined the governing body, which has increased governors' range of skills. A recent restructuring has ensured that governors now have a more focused role in monitoring the progress and attainment of pupils. This has enabled them to begin to hold leaders more closely to account.
- The governing body ensures that pupil premium funding and PE and sport funding are spent effectively and make a positive difference to pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and staff ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding in school. They ensure that all staff are trained well and kept up to date with potential safeguarding issues, including extremism and radicalisation. Policies, procedures and record-keeping are thorough and timely. Staff are vigilant in reporting any concern they have about any pupil, in accordance with the school's policy.
- Safeguarding documentation shows that school leaders work closely with other professionals. This multi-professional approach ensures that vulnerable pupils' needs are clearly identified and effective action is taken to protect them.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection expressed the view that their children were safe and well cared for in school. Pupils also told the inspector that they felt safe and knew who to talk to if they were worried.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The school's evaluation of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning is accurate. Teaching is now typically good across the school as a result of high-quality training and staff sharing good practice with colleagues. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to motivate and interest all pupils.
- All staff create a good climate for learning through very positive relationships, interesting lessons and effective questioning. This has resulted in pupils engaging in, and enjoying, their learning experiences at school.
- The assessment and tracking system used to check individual pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is well understood by all. As a result, teachers have a clear understanding of the progress each individual pupil needs to make throughout

each year. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their mathematical understanding need to be developed further.

- However, the tracking of other subjects, such as history, geography and design and technology, has only recently been introduced and is not being effectively used to ensure that all pupils make strong and sustained progress in these subjects.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils and are well trained and well deployed by teachers. They use detailed questioning, both in lessons and with small groups, to maintain pupils' concentration and challenge them to deepen their thinking.
- Teachers teach phonics well. Pupils are equipped with the necessary phonics skills to take on more challenging texts. Phonics teaching is clearly focused on appropriate developmental expectations and has resulted in strong outcomes for all pupils.
- The teaching of reading is a strength of the school. Pupils read with confidence and enjoyment. Pupils successfully use their knowledge of phonics to decode unknown words and they enjoy reading a wide range of texts. Pupils falling behind in reading are supported effectively to ensure that they catch up quickly.
- Pupils' work and school assessment information show that standards in writing are improving. Teachers, however, are not consistently rigorous in ensuring that pupils' spelling skills are applied consistently in independent writing.
- Parents are supportive of the school's policy on homework. Pupils see the importance of homework and engage well in tasks set. They are given opportunities to practise and consolidate their skills.
- Feedback from teachers is in line with school policy and supports pupils' next steps in learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The welcoming and friendly community ethos is central to the school's work in promoting the happiness and success of all pupils.
- Pupils enjoy learning. They are keen to find out new information. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about how happy and safe their children are in school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and across the school. They are polite and courteous to all adults and have very positive attitudes to learning. Their attendance and punctuality are good. Staff provide good pastoral care to promote pupils' welfare effectively.
- Leaders have created a safe and caring environment where pupils are helped to respect each other and get along together. Pupils build friendships well and show genuine concern for each other.
- Pupils are confident and willing to speak up in class. They listen well most of the time when a teacher or another pupil is speaking.
- Pupils have been successfully developing their resilience, determination and perseverance in completing work in class, using the teaching prompts and displays to

support their independence.

- The vast majority of pupils and parents say that pupils are safe at school. Parents are appreciative of the school's friendly, caring ethos. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils say that bullying is rare and are very confident that teachers will quickly and fairly resolve any concerns they might have.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is excellent. Pupils were polite, respectful and well mannered during the inspection. Even during the snowy weather conditions, pupils behaved well. They accessed the areas of provision sensibly and with respect. They remained engaged with tasks throughout playtime. When outdoors, pupils say that any incidents are dealt with effectively by adults and that they know who to seek help from should they need to.
- Despite there being very few incidents of challenging behaviour in school, accurate records are kept of any incidents. Consequently, staff can see any patterns of behaviour that may occur and act appropriately to prevent any escalation. The vast majority of staff say that pupils behave well and show respect for each other and adults.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They apply themselves very well to tasks set and work well together to share their ideas and learning. They take pride in their work.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is in line with the national average and persistent absence is tackled effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils across the school are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They are building on their previous learning well in developing secure knowledge, understanding and skills from their different starting points.
- Cohorts are very small. Consequently, the effect each pupil's results have on the school's outcomes information is significant. The progress and attainment of each pupil are therefore tracked individually in reading, writing and mathematics, resulting in strong progress.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 was above the national average.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average. The percentage exceeding national expectations was above the national average in reading and writing but slightly below in mathematics, as pupils need more opportunities to talk about mathematical concepts to deepen their understanding.
- In 2017, all of the pupils in Year 4 attained standards at least in line with age-related expectations in reading and mathematics, with a proportion achieving the higher

standard.

- In 2017, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in writing was lower due to inconsistencies in the quality of pupils' spelling.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils in Year 4 achieved as well as their peers.
- The school holds staff to account for the progress of pupils. Teachers are aware of children's starting points and are challenged to ensure that good progress is made.
- Pupils read widely and often. Staff choose motivating texts and genres, giving all pupils the chance to access challenging and interesting texts that increase their understanding and improve their vocabulary.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader has a clear vision for improving the provision further. She has a good understanding of its strengths and has plans in place to address any areas for development.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the time they leave Reception has been above the national average for the last two years. The majority of children enter the Reception class with skills and understanding typical of their age.
- Strong relationships with the Little Oaks nursery provision ensure that transition into school is seamless, impacting positively on the rates of progress in Reception.
- Teaching and learning in the early years are good as assessments are used effectively to plan for children's next steps in development.
- Despite the very low numbers of disadvantaged pupils, leaders use additional funding well to provide resources and support for disadvantaged children to enable them to overcome any barriers to learning and catch up with their peers.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and welfare requirements are fully met, so children are kept safe and are well cared for.
- Relationships between adults and children are good and, as a result, children are happy and behave well. They work and play happily together. They are proud of their work and are confident enough to show it to others.
- Children enjoy the opportunities provided both indoors and outdoors. These are enhanced by forest school activities and a curriculum specifically planned to interest the children.

School details

Unique reference number	122170
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10042169

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

Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Co-chair Mrs Mary Wallace Co-chair Mrs Jane Wrigley
Headteacher	Angela Speed
Telephone number	01434 603 870
Website	www.acomb.northumberland.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@acomb.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 November 2015

Information about this school

- Acomb First School is smaller than the average school.
- There are three classes. The early years comprises children in Reception. There is a key stage 1 class which contains Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. Then there is one key stage 2 class, for years 3 and 4.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is below that of schools nationally.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are a small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The school works in partnership with Little Oaks, the adjoining nursery school, to provide a breakfast club for children from both settings. An independent after school

club provides after hours care; for children from school, as well as older children from other schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes on both days of the inspection. The headteacher was absent during the inspection.
- Meetings were held with the coordinator for the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, the early years leader and the leaders for mathematics and English. The inspector also met with groups of pupils, a representative from the local authority, several members of the governing body, the school improvement partner (brokered by the local authority) and the headteacher of a partnership school.
- Together, a senior leader, a headteacher of a partnership school and the inspector conducted a book scrutiny of children's work from all classes. Additionally, children's work displayed throughout the school was examined by the inspector and information displayed to support learning was evaluated.
- The views expressed in the 32 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspector also spoke with several parents at the beginning of the first inspection day to gather their opinions of the school.
- The inspector looked at school information, observed the school's work and examined a range of documents, including the school's own records relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning, the performance management of staff, safeguarding records and evaluations of attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Lucie Stephenson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
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