

Rothbury First School

Addycombe, Rothbury, Morpeth, Northumberland NE65 7PG

Inspection dates

19–20 March 2019

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and other leaders, including governors, are highly ambitious and have a clear vision for the school. They set high standards and expectations for everyone.
- Governors consistently challenge the school and hold all leaders to account for pupils' outcomes and well-being. They know the school extremely well.
- The work of the school around pupils' welfare and personal development is outstanding. Parents spoken to highly praise the support given to their children.
- In almost all year groups, current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their different starting points.
- However, although improving, the most able pupils in key stage 2 are not, as yet, consistently achieving the standards of which they are capable in writing.
- Children achieve well in early years and are well prepared for Year 1 because of good leadership and teaching.
- Pupils benefit greatly from the nurturing, caring and family ethos in all aspects of school life. Pupils are confident and happy and feel extremely well cared for.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and relationships are positive. Pupils have positive attitudes and enjoy learning.
- Pupils behave extremely well, both in their lessons and at other times of the day. Pupils are respectful towards others. Instances of bullying are very rare.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Pupils say that they feel safe.
- Pupils' current standards overall in topic work, science and religious education (RE) are good. However, there is some variability, for a proportion of pupils in key stage 2, in the level of challenge provided.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well because their barriers to learning are identified quickly and checks on their achievement are thorough and accurate.
- Pupils' attendance is currently below the national average. However, it is increasing rapidly due to the actions of leaders.
- The curriculum is well planned. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is promoted effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' outcomes further, by ensuring that a greater proportion of pupils achieve the greater depth in writing in key stage 2.
- Improve teaching and learning, by ensuring that the work set for the most able pupils, particularly for those at the top end of the school, is consistently challenging in topic work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and have developed a strong vision for the future of high aspirations and expectations. Staff within the school share this vision and it is equally supported by parents and carers.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's performance because of their ongoing and accurate monitoring and evaluation procedures. They are quick to identify those areas of the school's work that need further development, and improvement planning is focused on the correct priorities. The headteacher is clear about the standards expected in school and takes effective steps to make sure that all pupils receive the high-quality education they deserve.
- Leaders make sure that pupils' progress is monitored carefully. There is a planned programme across the school year where they use detailed evidence to check that pupils are making the best progress that they can. When pupils are identified as not making progress, additional support and teaching are quickly put into place.
- Staff access a variety of training and support provided by the local authority and through working with the school's development partner. This has enabled staff to further develop their skills not only as teachers but also as leaders. Staff spoken to were very positive about the training they have taken part in and its impact in the classroom.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils benefit from a curriculum that is broad and effective but also interesting to pupils. Where pupils show additional interest and engagement in a particular area, the curriculum is flexible enough to respond to their interests. For example, the oldest pupils in school showed an increased awareness and understanding of environmental issues and, as a result, created their own video to explain the impact of plastic pollution on animals and the countryside. The use of the forest school provision is enabling pupils to learn about their immediate area and the natural world, developing their scientific, geographical, literacy and personal and social skills. Pupils of all ages access this provision on a planned basis across the year. For example, Year 2 pupils prepared a trail for visitors to explore the different elements of the forest area, including a 'turtle museum' and poetry to help everyone understand about the different plants and animals that they might find there. As a result of the curriculum provision, pupils across most year groups are making good progress.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities and visits support the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils have planned opportunities to explore and celebrate the major religious festivals across the year, including Diwali, Ramadan and Easter. Visitors play their part too. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were able to extend their understanding of different beliefs through visits from, for example, a humanist speaker. Parents and families are encouraged by leaders and staff to share their different cultural backgrounds with pupils in school.
- The leaders for English and mathematics are skilled and have an accurate understanding of how pupils are progressing and the quality of provision they are receiving. The role of middle leaders overall is being developed further across the school to include the development of foundation subjects. The impact is already

evident in pupils' books, especially in science. Further actions are being taken to provide opportunities for all middle leaders of foundation subjects to have designated leadership time to monitor and evaluate their area of work. However, in some year groups, foundation subject books are not yet of the same high quality as those in English and mathematics.

- All leaders, including governors, feel that preparing pupils for life in modern Britain is an essential part of the school's work. The school sees that pupils' understanding and acceptance of difference are integral to their understanding of the wider community. Leaders recognise that pupils overall come from a community that is not always representative of life in modern Britain. As a result, every opportunity is taken to enable pupils to explore and share the diversity of life in Britain today. For example, an annual diversity project has been developed by a member of staff; new families joining the school are encouraged to work with pupils to support their understanding of difference and members of different religious communities visit the school. Pupils spoken to are able to articulate the importance of difference, how to respect differences and how these should be celebrated and shared. As one Year 4 pupil stated, 'Being different is not a problem because everyone is entitled to be different but still equal.'
- Parents are very positive about the work of the school. Of those who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and free-text service, the overwhelming majority are highly positive in their praise of what the school is providing for their children. As one parent stated, 'Moving to this school has been the best decision we have made in terms of our child's learning and well-being.'

Governance of the school

- Governors have an accurate view of the school because they are regular visitors and work closely with the headteacher and leaders to monitor pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, they receive timely information from the headteacher in detailed reports.
- Members of the governing body possess a wide range of skills and experience, which they use effectively to challenge the work of the headteacher and staff in school. Records of governors' meetings show that governors contribute well to the school's improvement planning and monitor the spending of additional funding to ensure impact on pupils' progress.
- Governors constantly make sure that they listen to the needs of parents and children and respond appropriately and take action as necessary.
- Governors are passionate about the families and the children who attend school, and are eager to ensure that everyone reaches their full potential. They see Rothbury First as 'being more than just a school,' and that 'it is a family, and a cherished resource within the community'.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a very strong culture of safeguarding that is rigorously upheld by all staff

within the school.

- The school knows its pupils very well and detailed records are kept about all safeguarding concerns. Staff are tenacious in accessing guidance and advice from outside agencies for their pupils and families.
- The designated lead for safeguarding and deputy designated lead are extremely knowledgeable about pupils and their families. As a result, support for pupils is provided quickly and effectively, enabling issues to be dealt with as soon as they occur.
- In discussion, pupils show that they have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in school and outside in the wider community. They talk confidently about ways they are taught to reduce risks, including staying safe online.
- Leaders and staff recognise that the school's local environment and position within a village community can potentially pose greater risks for their pupils. As a result, additional actions have been taken to address these aspects. These include work around river safety and teaching all pupils to swim, 'stranger danger' to help pupils recognise that not all adults in the area will be known to them, and also awareness of the risks when camping and lighting fires.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is typically good and this leads to pupils throughout the school making strong progress. Teachers are positive and form good working relationships with the pupils. A calm and purposeful atmosphere in classrooms ensures that all pupils are encouraged to do well.
- Teachers and their assistants are enthusiastic and hardworking. They are passionate about their work and ambitious for their pupils' achievement. There is evidence of the positive impact this has on pupils' self-confidence and attitudes to learning as they progress through school. Pupils work hard in lessons and most are resilient when tackling new and more challenging material. They are proud of the work they produce and are keen to be involved in activities, sharing their ideas with their peers.
- Adults reinforce high expectations of behaviour and, as a result, very few pupils were observed during learning observations by the inspector as being off task. Pupils are positive about the support they receive from their teachers and enjoy being challenged.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They use effective questioning to elicit responses from pupils, giving them time to answer and praising their contributions. Pupils are regularly challenged to explore and extend their responses and encouraged to explain how an answer has been reached.
- Teachers set interesting tasks that motivate pupils to do their best. Pupils learn from an early age how to listen carefully to instructions and work as part of a group. For example, pupils in Year 1 listened carefully to each other's ideas as to 'why the pigeon could not drive the bus' and then eagerly moved to their own writing to produce some very imaginative reasons using carefully constructed sentences.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective due to the newly introduced structured approach implemented by leaders and staff. Teachers and teaching assistants have secure subject knowledge and accurately model letter sounds that effectively develop

pupils' phonic understanding.

- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Pupils are given regular opportunities to develop their numeracy skills through reasoning and problem solving. Pupils use calculation skills that they have learned previously to solve increasingly complex mathematical problems. Staff are adept at identifying and addressing misconceptions in pupils' understanding. A group of pupils spoken to reported that, 'Maths is confusing and that's fun as we've got to work out what the confusing bit is and how to solve it.'
- Teachers plan well-thought-out topics to promote pupils' learning across the curriculum. However, the activities that teachers provide for the most able pupils in topic work sometimes lack sufficient challenge. As a result, the standard of work in topic books, in some year groups, is not of the same standard as that seen across other aspects of the curriculum.
- Across each year group, pupils are provided with interesting and engaging opportunities to develop their skills in writing for varying purposes and in response to different experiences. Throughout their writing, pupils are supported in ensuring that grammar and punctuation use is accurate and effective. However, for the most able pupils in upper school, opportunities to write at the higher standard are not regularly provided.
- Across all subjects, teachers are very aware of the need to develop pupils' language skills, both spoken and written. Every opportunity is taken to extend their learning, including by providing pupils with challenging texts, providing opportunities to talk through ideas before beginning to write, and teachers themselves modelling the quality of language required. For example, in a mixed-age class of Year 3 and Year 4, pupils were able to use the mathematical vocabulary necessary to accurately explore and explain the inverse of multiplication and division and subsequent links to fractions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Relationships in school are excellent. Staff and pupils act with respect for each other at all times.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils spoken to value their education and appreciate what Rothbury First School can provide for them. This has a strong impact on the progress they make within school.
- This is an inclusive school where pupils feel valued and respected. Pupils spoken to see their school as being a warm and welcoming place where all adults will care for them. Pupils who have recently joined the school are very appreciative of the help and support they are given and feel that they are immediately included in the school community.
- Pupils recognise the need to be continuously challenged to make the best progress possible in their learning. They talk confidently about how they enjoy challenging tasks across a range of subject areas and the new skills and knowledge they develop as a result.

- The school is extremely tenacious in working with outside agencies to make sure that families and their children receive the best possible advice and guidance to support their emotional and physical well-being. Strong relationships have been developed with families by leaders and staff in school and, as a result, parents are confident to share concerns, knowing that they will receive the support and care they need. A common phrase used by parents spoken to about the help the school gives is, 'They all go above and beyond to help my child.'
- Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that any concerns or issues to do with safety would be dealt with very quickly by any adult. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including online, both in school and at home.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the need to treat everyone fairly and this is shown in their ability to welcome and support all newcomers into their school. They have a strong awareness of their own identity and show respect for the similarities and differences in others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in classrooms and interruptions are rare. They focus well on their learning and this has a notably positive effect on the progress they make.
- Pupils understand that poor behaviour can have an impact on their learning and that it is important not only to manage their own behaviour but also to help others. As a result, disruption within classrooms or around the school is extremely rare.
- The school is an orderly and calm environment which is well cared for by both pupils and adults. Every opportunity is taken to celebrate pupils' work around the school, both inside and outside, and pupils are extremely eager to show visitors what they have created and achieved. For example, Year 2 pupils working in the outside forest area were able to share their poetry written in response to the wildlife and plants. They were able to talk about poetry creating 'pictures in our heads' and describing daffodils as 'the golden suns'.
- Pupils move easily around the building in a purposeful way and know clearly there are rules and procedures, which they follow consistently. They have a good understanding of the systems in place within school to address positive and negative behaviours and recognise that all adults will respond quickly to any issues. There are no raised voices from adults in school and in turn pupils respond overall in a similar way.
- Pupils are happy to come to school and they understand the need to be in school so that they can learn. Attendance figures are currently below the national average, but this is as a result of recent recurring illnesses across the school. Work on this area is an ongoing high priority for leaders and governors and attendance is rapidly moving back to the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Children enter early years with an increasingly varied level of skills, which often are

below those typical for their age. By the time children leave early years, they are ready for learning in Year 1. In 2018, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was below national standards. However, current assessment information shows that the proportion of children achieving and exceeding a good level of development has increased considerably. This is due to the strength in leadership in the early years provision and good teaching.

- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check in 2018 was above the national average, although a decrease on previous years. However, recent actions by leaders and staff focused on the teaching of phonics are ensuring that current pupils are reading with increased accuracy and fluency. The introduction of targeted phonics teaching for Nursery-age children is again having an impact on outcomes in reading.
- In 2018, a higher than average proportion of pupils in Year 2 achieved at the expected standard and at greater depth in writing and mathematics. In reading, although the proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth was above national figures, the number of pupils who achieved the expected standard was below the national figure. However, leaders reacted quickly to determine the reasons for this and immediate actions have addressed this area.
- Work in books, accurate assessments and monitoring demonstrate that currently, a high proportion of pupils continue to achieve at the expected standard and at greater depth in key stage 1. Overall, as pupils move into key stage 2, they continue to make good progress across reading, writing and mathematics. However, in writing, the highest attaining pupils in key stage 2 are not always regularly provided with the opportunity to work at greater depth. This is due to a lack of consistently challenging writing experiences.
- The work in current pupils' books in writing, mathematics and other subjects across the curriculum shows that disadvantaged pupils progress well. They make the same good progress as other pupils in school.
- Pupils of all abilities learn and achieve well in most year groups in topic work, RE and science. However, there is greater variability in the standards reached for some of the oldest pupils in topic work.
- The number of pupils with SEND in each year group is too small to report on without the risk of their identification. However, many of these pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. This is the result of the strength in leadership of SEND, the early identification of needs as soon as pupils enter the school, and support that addresses effectively children's barriers to learning.

Early years provision

Good

- The leader for the early years unit, although relatively new to the post, is highly skilled and knows the provision extremely well. They have accurately identified the provision's strengths and precise plans are in place to bring about continuous improvements. Staff are now given clear direction for the planning and provision of children's learning.
- Staff have excellent relationships with children. They promote children's independence well. Children are confident to explore the many well-planned opportunities on offer.

Staff have created a nurturing, secure learning environment. Children's behaviour shows that they feel safe to explore the classrooms and outdoor areas and to try new experiences.

- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development was below the national average in 2018. This reflects the range of children's starting points on entry to the school. Children are increasingly beginning school with low scores on a number of baseline assessment areas, particularly in language, communication and personal and social skills. However, through good teaching, the provision of rich learning experiences and, where appropriate, targeted additional support, children are currently making at least good progress and are prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Adults assess children accurately and carefully. They record their assessments so that there is a clear picture of each child's progress across different areas of learning. Assessments are used effectively to plan subsequent activities to move learning on.
- Children work well together across the unit. Their behaviour is very good. They are motivated learners and their written work shows that they progress well from basic mark making at Nursery age to writing simple phrases and full sentences at Reception age. In their number work, children develop secure counting and number skills. Every opportunity is exploited to reinforce learning. For example, children take part in a straw poll at the beginning of the day for their story at snack time and then count up the votes.
- Safeguarding in early years is effective. Appropriate procedures are in place, keeping children safe and ensuring that their welfare needs are being met at all times. Children are given the opportunity to try out different activities that require them to understand how to do more challenging tasks, but be able to do them safely. For example, when digging for 'dinosaur bones' in the forest area, children managed the equipment appropriately and understood how to make sure that other children didn't fall into the hole being dug.
- Leaders work effectively with outside agencies to support children who require additional help, for example children with speech and language concerns. In addition, staff access a range of training to extend their knowledge and understanding of children's particular needs.
- Attractive displays and activities are extremely well organised to promote learning and to celebrate children's work across early years. Children enjoy their learning in a bright and captivating environment, both indoors and outside. Staff use interesting resources that excite children's imagination and give them the opportunity to experiment and take risks.
- Relationships with parents are strong. Leaders are developing more opportunities for parents to support their children's learning. For example, a weekly home-learning blog is shared with parents to illustrate their children's learning and enjoyment and provide additional guidance on how they can support their children at home. As one parent stated, 'It is a friendly and welcoming place for my child to begin their education and the progress they have made has been really impressive.'

School details

Unique reference number	122221
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10059125

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	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Watson
Headteacher	Nicola Mathewson
Telephone number	01669 620283
Website	www.rothburyfirst.northumberland.sch.uk
Email address	admin@rothburyfirst.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 January 2015

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized first school.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is below the national average.
- Fewer pupils than average speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons, including phonic groupings and provision in early years. Some of these lessons were visited jointly with the headteacher.
- The lead inspector looked at samples of pupils' work covering a range of subjects, abilities, year groups and gender groups, including in early years. This was done jointly with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team.
- The lead inspector met with a group of pupils and spoke informally with pupils during lessons, lunchtimes and breaktimes. Pupils in Year 2 were also heard reading aloud.
- The behaviour of pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and as pupils moved around the school was observed.
- The lead inspector held a range of meetings, including with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, leaders responsible for safeguarding, attendance and behaviour, the leader responsible for early years, and the leader of the provision for pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector met with four representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors and vice-chair. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector met formally with a group of five parents and spoke to parents informally at the beginning of the school day. They also took into account the 28 responses from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 25 responses made through the free-text service.
- The lead inspector considered the 11 responses from the staff online survey and the 29 responses from the pupil online survey.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents relating to the school's provision including: the self-evaluation and improvement plan; minutes of meetings of the governing body; safeguarding procedures; information about the progress and attainment of all pupils; plans related to additional government funding; and information on the school's website. The lead inspector also checked the school's single central record.

Inspection team

Anne Vernon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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