

Tritlington Church of England First School

Tritlington, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 3DU

Inspection dates

24–25 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
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

- Pupils make steady rather than good progress. From typical starting points, most pupils develop the skills and knowledge expected for their age; too few exceed this expectation, especially the most able.
- The standard of pupils' writing and presentation, especially among boys, is variable. Not all pupils achieve as well as they should in this aspect of English.
- The quality of teaching overall is inconsistent. Adults do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve; consequently, activities are not always well matched to pupils' abilities and starting points.
- The teaching of reading is not fully effective in ensuring pupils become confident and fluent readers by the end of key stage 1. There are too few books that allow pupils to practise the letters and sounds they have been learning.
- Adults in the early years do not maintain a consistent focus on developing children's speech, language and communication. Adults' questioning skills require development.
- Activities children choose for themselves in the early years lack purpose and challenge in order for them to reach their full potential.
- Leaders' systems for checking on the work of the school are not refined enough to allow them to pinpoint what is preventing the school from making more rapid improvements.
- Governors, especially those who are new to their post, have not accessed relevant training to enable them to challenge the work of the school with the rigour and focus that are needed.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher understands the challenges facing the school.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to enable eligible pupils to catch up.
- Pupils are polite and courteous and show great care and warmth towards their friends. They understand right from wrong and behave well.
- Pupils develop into confident, happy and respectful individuals because the school keeps a keen eye on their personal development and welfare. Pupils are safe and happy.
- Parents are highly positive about the care their children receive in this 'family-friendly' school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make consistently strong progress in their learning and a greater proportion reach above what is expected for their age by:
 - ensuring that all staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - building more effectively on pupils' starting points so that teaching challenges them to reach their full potential, especially those who are most able
 - addressing the lower standards evident in pupils' writing, particularly for boys
 - developing teachers' understanding of how pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills develop as they grow older and move from year to year
 - improving the quality of adult interactions with children in the early years
 - providing more challenging opportunities for children in the early years to learn and develop during the activities they choose for themselves
 - providing a greater range of books that allows pupils to practise the letters and sounds they have been learning.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders, including governors, on the rate of school improvement by:
 - ensuring that the headteacher receives more dedicated time to fulfil her leadership responsibilities
 - setting precise targets for improvement that enable governors to challenge leaders and hold staff to account for the pace of school improvement
 - refining whole-school systems for analysing information, including about pupils' learning and progress, so that there is a consistent focus on those pupils, and groups of pupils, that are not doing as well as they should
 - focusing evaluations of teaching on the difference that chosen strategies are making to the learning and progress of pupils, especially boys and the most able
 - ensuring that governors access training relevant to their roles so they are clear in their responsibilities and can offer effective support and challenge to the school.

An external review of governance 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

- Frequent changes of leadership and recent turbulence among the governing body have led to a slower pace of improvement and a decline in the overall quality of education since the last inspection. The headteacher has not received enough dedicated leadership time, as a teaching headteacher, to take stock and forge a better way forward.
- Leaders collect information about attendance, pupils' progress and teachers' performance in the classroom frequently but do not analyse this with a sharp enough eye. Evaluations lack the precision and rigour needed to enable better pinpointing of where the school needs to focus its efforts.
- The headteacher's checks on the quality of teaching describe what the teachers do rather than the impact they have on pupils' learning. Feedback to staff about their work can therefore be woolly and over generous. Teaching practices have not moved on quickly enough to enable all pupils, especially boys and the most able, to reach their full potential.
- The headteacher's analysis of pupils' learning and progress focuses on individual pupils rather than revealing the bigger trends and patterns across the school. This prevents a better understanding of which year groups, classes or pupil groups need further support to reach and exceed what is expected for their age.
- Target setting is too general. While the headteacher has an accurate view of the school and has formulated the right overall areas for improvement, school development plans lack the measurable targets and timescales needed. Leaders, including governors, do not always know whether the actions being implemented are bringing about a swifter rate of improvement and having the desired effect on teaching and pupils' progress.
- The curriculum requires improvement. It does not enable all pupils to make the progress they should from their starting points. Some staff do not understand the small, progressive steps pupils need to make in their learning to enable a faster rate of progress. As such, pupils sometimes receive work that is either too easy or too hard for their current stage of development.
- Pupils benefit from a range of additional activities to enrich the curriculum, including visits to places outside school, such as a local dairy farm and after-school clubs. Pupils' personal, social and emotional development is well planned to include themes such as love, friendship and tolerance, where pupils learn how to accept and celebrate difference. This helps prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders are effective in their use of pupil premium funding. Specialist programmes, to support reading or spelling for example, are used well and in a timely manner to enable those who are entitled to support through the additional funding to catch up and keep up with their peers. Less focus is given to how money could be used to stretch those who are most able.

- The primary physical education and sport premium is also used well. There is a clear focus on developing staff confidence and competence and enhancing pupils' physical skills. Specialist coaches work alongside staff to develop their skills and pupils take part in regular tournaments and festivals to learn about the value of teamwork, sportsmanship and competition. This promotes their social and cultural development.
- Local authority officers and those from the dioceses of Durham and Newcastle are accurate in their views of the school. Support has been directed at leadership and governance over the last two terms. Professional development has not been frequent or focused enough to bring about a faster pace of improvement.

Governance of the school

- There has been significant change within the governing body over the last few months, including the positions of chair and vice-chair. New governors and those with different responsibilities have not accessed the training they require to appreciate their roles fully and offer the finely tuned support and challenge that the school needs.
- Governors have begun to evaluate the work of the school, including the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are beginning to use information provided by the headteacher more carefully to make challenges in governing body meetings.
- A lack of insightful analysis and a set of flimsy targets within the school development plan do not support governors to challenge the school with greater rigour. Governors acknowledge that an external review of governance would be timely and support their effectiveness in discharging their duties.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture of safeguarding where staff are clear about their responsibilities and take pride in knowing every child and every family well. This enables them to work effectively with children and families to overcome barriers to learning, for example where a child is experiencing difficulties at home.
- Staff have accessed appropriate training. Adults are vigilant when looking for the signs that pupils may be at risk and know how and to whom they should report concerns. Leaders are quick to request the support of external agencies when they feel that this is necessary. These agencies are not always prompt in dealing with the school's requests.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not enabled pupils to make consistently strong progress in their learning. As a result, pupils do not attain as highly as they should. Too few pupils reach above what is expected for their age, given their starting points.

- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Too many teachers plan lessons so that all pupils, regardless of their ability, are working on the same activity, at the same level. Some staff do not understand how pupils' skills and understanding should progress from year to year. In these instances, teachers plan work that pupils have already mastered and, as a result, pupils make slower progress.
- The teaching of writing is not as strong as other subjects. There are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their understanding of grammar and punctuation to their own compositions. Boys, in particular, find it hard to generate their own imaginative ideas and record these accurately on the page. While pupils are encouraged to talk about their writing, they are not explicitly shown how their speech translates into written sentences.
- The teaching of reading has improved recently, especially for the youngest pupils. Dedicated time each day is allowing pupils to learn new sounds quickly and recognise them in individual words. There is less opportunity for pupils to practise reading and spelling these sounds in whole sentences or texts to support reading and spelling. There are too many books that contain sounds other than those the pupils have learned or are learning. This prevents them from becoming fluent and confident readers quickly.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers plan activities that challenge pupils to think for themselves and apply their learned skills in a different context. For example, pupils in class 2 (Years 2, 3 and 4) were eager to solve their 'who am I?' puzzles in mathematics, using their knowledge of place value, rounding and multiples to find the correct solution. This encouraged their problem-solving abilities and stretched their thinking.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those in receipt of support through the pupil premium learn well during their individual or small-group sessions. This is because the programmes undertaken, such as in reading or spelling, have been specifically designed to address pupils' gaps in knowledge within a defined number of weeks. Tracking of pupils' individual achievements is helpful in this instance.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have created a caring and nurturing environment where relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are good. In lessons, this gives pupils the confidence to speak out and contribute to discussions without fear of failure.
- Themes of love, friendship and perseverance are at the heart of the school's work to produce happy and confident pupils who are resilient to the challenges they may face within school and beyond. Opportunities to speak in front of larger audiences and consider their own areas of expertise build pupils' self-esteem and support their spiritual and social development.

- The personal, social and health curriculum successfully addresses concepts such as appropriate family relationships, personal hygiene and what it means to be proud. Stories are frequently used as a way of breaking down complex subjects and depersonalising issues that pupils themselves may have experienced, such as bereavement and feelings of loss.
- Pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of the importance of being safe. They can articulate the potential risks when they are online and can make informed decisions about how to protect themselves, in school and at home, for example, in relation to 'stranger danger' or crossing the road.
- Parents who shared their views, either with the inspector or through the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, indicated that their children were happy, safe and well looked after in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. They have a strong moral compass and are clear of the rules they must follow to be safe and learn well. This makes for good behaviour. Some older pupils take on the role of buddies, supporting those who fall out with each other to resolve their own conflicts peacefully.
- Younger and older pupils play together harmoniously in this 'family-friendly' school. When someone falls over or needs comfort, older pupils regularly show their caring side, extending their friendship to those that need it. This makes for a pleasant atmosphere around school.
- Pupils are ready and willing to learn. They show keen attitudes to learning, listening attentively to their teachers and applying themselves diligently to the tasks they have been given. Even when work is not well matched to their abilities or interests, pupils calmly and carefully complete what has been asked of them. Such positive behaviours are not capitalised upon by staff. Some pupils' learning potential is not being fully exploited.
- Bullying is rare. Most pupils who spoke to inspectors were clear that when issues do occur, they are addressed swiftly. Leaders agree that teaching and the curriculum could be strengthened to help pupils to better understand the different forms bullying may take, including those related to prejudice.
- Attendance is improving so that it is now broadly average. A clampdown on term-time holidays, together with regular celebration of 100% attendance, are sending a clear message to pupils and parents that 'every school day counts'.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils make expected rather than good progress as they move through the school, because, over time, the quality of teaching has been too variable. Most pupils reach the standards expected of them at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Too few pupils, especially the most able, exceed what is expected for their age.

- The standard of pupils' writing requires improvement, overall and for boys. Pupils lack the grammatical accuracy and proficiency in spelling needed to record their thoughts correctly. Boys, particularly, struggle to generate new ideas for their compositions. Across the school, pupils' handwriting and presentation need further attention.
- Over time, more pupils are becoming fluent and confident readers. Some still enter class 2 (for pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4) unable to sound out new words or apply their phonic knowledge to their spelling. This is because there are not enough books that allow pupils to practise reading words and sentences that include only the sounds they have learned or are currently learning. Teachers do not always make the link between phonics and spelling. Outcomes of the Year 1 phonics screening check have been broadly average over the last three years.
- Pupils are able to recall number facts with ease and confidence. This has ensured a stronger foundation than in other subjects for pupils to apply what they have been taught and to tackle tricky problems. The standard of pupils' work in mathematics is higher than in reading and writing because a new mathematics scheme is helping teachers to pitch their lessons at a more challenging level.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress during their individual or small-group sessions. The complex needs of some pupils are addressed well so that they can integrate into the life of the school and work productively in the classroom.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Most children arrive in Nursery with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. An increasing proportion join the school above what is typical, with the confidence, speech and curiosity to hit the ground running and absorb all that the setting can offer.
- Some Nursery children were observed writing in recognisable letters, counting up to 10 and with the manual dexterity to thread small nuts onto a screw. They are clear and accurate in their communication, questioning adults and friends alike, such as when one child asked, 'who is next to board the aeroplane?'
- Staff do not readily capitalise on these strong starting points. Most children make typical progress rather than the better-than-typical progress of which they are capable. While an above-average proportion of children are ready for the demands of Year 1, few exceed this expectation, especially those who are most able.
- The quality of teaching during whole-class, adult-led sessions is stronger than at the times of the day when children choose their own activities. While adults have thought carefully about the questions they ask during more formal teaching times, the quality of their interactions with children weakens when they intervene during children's play.
- Adults do not always expect children to respond to their questions in full sentences. Too many questions are asked that require only a single-word response. Some staff do not get down to child level when communicating so that children can learn that entering into conversation requires eye contact and an understanding of turn-taking.

- Activities children choose for themselves are focused too heavily on providing an enjoyable experience rather than on what children will be learning. For example, Reception children were invited to make paper aeroplanes but it was unclear what the teacher expected children to learn from this experience.
- A new electronic logging tool is helping parents to contribute more effectively to their child's learning journey (record of achievements). Staff are aware that these contributions, and those recorded during school time, need to identify more precisely what skills, knowledge and understanding children have developed rather than simply describing the children's activity.
- Children play alongside their friends well, cooperating with each other to share the toys and resources available. Teachers and teaching assistants set high expectations for behaviour and have established clear routines that children understand. Adults ensure that children are well protected, safe and secure. They support children effectively to make safe choices.
- The early years leader does not have sufficient opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching or the curriculum. As such, she has not taken sufficient action to ensure that practice is consistently good and that all children, particularly the most able, make faster progress. A separate class for Reception and Year 1 children is beginning to support a better quality of teaching for these children, but it is too early to tell whether this will lead to the higher outcomes that are needed.

School details

Unique reference number	122299
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10000831

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.

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	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynsey Crofts
Headteacher	Helen Hughes
Telephone number	01670 787383
Website	www.tritlington.firstschool.org.uk
Email address	admin@tritlington.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–22 March 2012

Information about this school

- Tritlington First School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The headteacher is new in post since the previous inspection. She teaches the Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4 pupils (class 2) for four days of the week.

- Nursery children attend in the mornings only. Some Nursery children stay at school in the afternoon as part of local authority arrangements to pilot the forthcoming 30-hour entitlement for three- and four-year-olds. These children join the Reception and Year 1 pupils (class 1) in the afternoon.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed the quality of learning in all classes. He visited a number of shorter sessions where pupils were being taught phonics.
- The headteacher undertook three observations alongside the inspector and was observed giving feedback to one member of staff.
- The inspector looked at the current standard of pupils' work across the school. The headteacher and early years leader, accompanied by the vice-chair of the governing body, joined the inspector for this activity.
- The inspector listened to pupils read. He also spoke to pupils during lessons and in a formal meeting, as well as informally when they were playing with their friends at break about their learning and experiences at school.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, early years leader, the chair, vice-chair and two other members of the governing body, and a group of pupils. The inspector also met with two representatives from the local authority and one representative from the dioceses of Durham and Newcastle.
- The inspector evaluated a wide range of school documents, including the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation, information on pupils' progress, records of the checks made on the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and information on attendance and safeguarding.
- The views expressed in seven questionnaire returns from staff and 15 returns from pupils were also taken into account. The inspector spoke to 16 parents at the beginning or end of the first day of inspection, reviewed the 19 responses submitted through Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke to one parent on the telephone.

Inspection team

Lee Owston, lead inspector

Her Majesty's 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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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