

Castleside Primary School

Moorland Crescent, Castleside, Consett, County Durham DH8 9RG

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2018

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

- Leaders' and governors' actions have not secured consistently good teaching, learning or assessment across key stages or subjects.
- Too few pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve the standards that adults should expect of them over time. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, specifically, is too variable.
- Leaders' assessment information of pupils' achievements over time lacks accuracy. Leaders and teachers, therefore, do not plan precisely enough to meet pupils' needs.
- Senior and subject leaders' improvement plans lack detail and are not focused sufficiently on the correct priorities. The pace and extent of school improvement are therefore hindered.
- Senior leaders have not devised a consistent or clearly communicated approach to the teaching of reading. Not all pupils read regularly with adults in school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make inconsistent progress. Leaders do not capture this group's progress over time meticulously enough.
- Not all teachers make the best use of available teaching and learning time or resources. At times, additional adults are poorly deployed and contribute little to pupils' learning.
- Some teachers have not embedded good attitudes to learning among pupils. At times, the pace and quality of learning are disrupted.
- Not all staff tackle pupils' misconceptions or issues of presentation swiftly enough. Errors in spelling, grammar and letter formation linger. Pupils do not take sufficient pride in their work.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the early years is too variable. Children are not challenged effectively in their learning. From broadly typical starting points, not all children are well prepared for the Year 1 curriculum.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and governors have an honest view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Leaders enrich pupils' daily experiences effectively. Work within the local community and across the wider curriculum is a strength.
- Pupils have wonderful manners. They are kind, helpful and friendly, and get along very well together. A warm welcome is given to visitors.
- The large majority of parents and carers are confident that their child is safe, happy and well looked after.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing greater consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across subjects and in each key stage, including the early years
 - securing outcomes for all pupils that consistently match or exceed national averages in reading, writing and mathematics in each key stage
 - capturing accurate assessment information about pupils' progress and achievements across the curriculum over time in a timely manner to better inform planning
 - ensuring that whole-school and subject-improvement plans are detailed and fully focused upon improving pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching and learning
 - creating an agreed, whole-school approach to the teaching of reading that is firmly rooted in good practice
 - refining systems for assessing the progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning in each key stage and eliminate instances of low-level disruption by:
 - offering pupils in each key stage sufficiently demanding work that is well matched to their needs and that challenges their thinking and deepens their knowledge, skills and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics
 - making the best possible use of additional adults and all available teaching and learning time
 - making sure that pupils read regularly with adults in school to practise and hone their skills of decoding, comprehension and deduction
 - addressing pupils' misconceptions in a timely manner, including issues of poor spelling, grammar, handwriting and the presentation of work.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding 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

- There has been a great deal of turbulence in staffing, governance and leadership since the previous inspection. The headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, early years leader and several governors are all relatively new to post. This has had a considerable effect on the school's performance.
- Leaders and governors have not secured consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across key stages or subjects. Work in pupils' books and the school's own assessment information show that too few children in the early years or pupils in key stages 1 and 2 currently make good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Senior and subject leaders have an honest view of the school's current performance. They have put improvement plans in place. These are, however, imprecise and do not focus sufficiently on the specifics. Too little detail is offered on how exactly leaders will improve the quality of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Links with pupils' outcomes are ambiguous in places. When and how the extent of improvement will be measured are also too vague.
- Senior leaders have refined their systems for tracking pupils' progress over time. The information gathered is starting to support leaders in knowing when and where additional support or challenge is needed for pupils. However, due to inaccuracies in teachers' assessment over time, information remains unreliable. This imprecision inhibits the effectiveness of teachers' and leaders' planning.
- Leaders recognise that reading is a priority for improvement. Despite their focus on raising the profile of reading, however, the quality of teaching and learning in this subject is not consistently good. Leaders have purchased new reading books and materials to enrich pupils' experiences. Teachers have been requested to read and discuss books regularly with pupils. Incentives and challenges have been devised to encourage pupils to read for pleasure. Nonetheless, a lack of consistency persists because leaders do not have a clearly defined, whole-school approach to the teaching of reading. Some staff in each key stage still lack the expertise and understanding needed to boost pupils' reading skills of decoding, fluency, deduction and comprehension.
- Senior leaders record information about the progress that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make each half-term. The material collated, however, is imprecise and therefore not helpful in determining the pace or amount of progress made by the group or each individual. Consequently, leaders cannot confidently demonstrate whether these pupils make sufficient progress from their different starting points.
- The headteacher and governors have a pupil premium spending plan in place for 2017/18. The plan is appropriately focused on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Over time, however, leaders have not evaluated thoroughly or effectively the effect that the additional money has. This means that leaders and governors cannot be confident that their actions are making a difference for disadvantaged pupils. There are too few disadvantaged pupils to remark upon their current progress in this report.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have taken up post since the previous inspection. Despite significant instability in terms of staffing and governance, they have established a warm, welcoming and pleasant ethos. This has led to the professional, cordial and community-spirited feeling that presides. One parent's viewpoint epitomised the view of several: 'This is a very caring and inclusive school with a strong community feel.'
- Leaders make effective use of the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding. Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the importance of fitness and links with health and well-being. They particularly enjoy and benefit from the wide array of competitive opportunities that leaders make available. Running the 'daily mile' is a firm favourite among pupils. Pupils' skills of teamwork, resilience and endurance are being developed effectively.
- Senior leaders are rightly proud of their work with local partners. This is a small school firmly at the heart of its community. Much work with neighbours and local businesses takes place, enabling pupils to become part of their local environment and confident, valued contributors to it.
- Leaders and governors are diligent in ensuring that pupils have enriching day-to-day opportunities in terms of the wider curriculum. Visits and visitors augment their daily experiences. This inspires curiosity and aspiration among pupils and means that they get a taste of the world beyond their immediate confines. In this way, leaders ensure that pupils are excited about, and well prepared for, life in modern Britain.
- Local authority partners have supported and challenged leaders and governors of the school effectively since September 2017. Although initially slow in making a positive difference for pupils and staff, the local authority has been instrumental in securing improvements in the early years, mathematics and English leadership this academic year. Helpful support for the headteacher and governors has also been arranged. The local authority is fully committed to sustaining its work with the school in the foreseeable future, as appropriate.

Governance of the school

- Governors commissioned a review of governance recently to help them to improve the quality of their contributions to the leadership and management of the school. They have worked diligently to sharpen their understanding of successful governance by acting upon the recommendations of the review. Consequently, governors now challenge as well as support leaders more effectively. Minutes of meetings show, however, that, at times, they fail to really probe the information or responses received from leaders. This lessens the extent of governors' influence on school improvement.
- Governors are fully committed to self-improvement, as indicated by their commissioning of the review. In addition, they take part in regular training events, both online and via opportunities offered by the local authority's governor services. Having completed a skills audit, governors also strive to get the correct balance of skills and abilities needed to manage their overall responsibilities. Governors are now better informed and are beginning to apply their knowledge to their roles more skilfully than in the past.

- Governors visit the school regularly to find out for themselves what it feels like to be a pupil at this school. They meet regularly with leaders and staff and look at the work in pupils' books. This allows governors to use first-hand information in their discussions and evaluation of leaders' work.
- Governors use up-to-date information to make sure that they know how to compare pupils' outcomes with other schools nationally. They have an honest appreciation of the school's current performance. Governors fully recognise the need to improve the quality of leadership, the consistency of teaching, the early years and pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher has tightened risk assessments and arrangements for managing pupils' safety. Risks to pupils are minimised as records are well maintained and detailed.
- Leaders have recently upgraded the process for logging concerns about pupils' behaviour and attendance. The introduction of a 'late book' is supporting and challenging families to understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and their effect on later life.
- Pupils' safety is held central to adults' thinking and work. Old PE equipment, for example, is checked and either removed or replaced where necessary. Issues of space and potential crowding in pupils' cloakrooms are being revised. Several parents and pupils expressed gratitude for the improved entry and exit systems put in place by the headteacher.
- Staff are confident in their understanding of the most recent child protection and safeguarding guidance. Recently, staff have undertaken refresher training regarding the 'Prevent' duty, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. They know how and to whom they should report any concerns that they may have.
- Leaders continually aim to deepen adults' skills and knowledge of child protection and safeguarding. They are currently intent on devising ways in which they can assess the depth of adults' knowledge and understanding of any training that has taken place.
- Leaders and staff work well in partnership with external agencies, drawing on additional expertise and advice in a timely manner. Police and health partners, for example, regularly contribute to assemblies and staff training sessions. Such work ensures that the needs of vulnerable families and pupils are met effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in each key stage is not consistently good. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, in particular, is too variable.
- The teaching and learning of reading across key stages vary in quality. There is no clear, whole-school approach to the teaching of reading. Too few pupils read regularly with adults. While some staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to build pupils' skills of decoding, fluency and comprehension effectively, others do not.

Consequently, despite new books, some improvement in the teaching of phonics and concerted efforts to raise the profile of reading, not all pupils make good progress from their different starting points.

- Not all teachers use assessment information effectively to plan tasks that match pupils' needs. In mathematics, reading and writing, pupils too often practise things they already know and can do. Insufficient challenge is hampering the pace of pupils' progress in these areas of the curriculum.
- Additional adults are sometimes well deployed to work directly with pupils. They are clear about the part they play in helping pupils achieve the intended learning. The focus is consistently on ensuring that pupils grasp key concepts and move on swiftly in their work and learning. However, too often, additional adults' role in supporting and challenging pupils in their learning is unclear. They wait for teachers' direction, play menial roles or make minimal contributions to pupils' progress.
- Some staff make good use of every available minute in terms of teaching and learning time. They ensure that pupils return promptly from breaks to class and are well prepared so that lessons start straightaway. This good practice is not consistent.
- Some teachers have established clear classroom rules and routines. Pupils often work conscientiously and apply themselves fully to their learning. At times, however, interruptions and low-level disturbances disrupt the pace and quality of learning in some classes.
- Teachers in some year groups tackle pupils' misconceptions promptly. These teachers address issues of poor letter formation, handwriting and presentation in pupils' work across the curriculum. Any common or repeated errors of grammar or spelling are tackled systematically so that pupils do not form poor habits. Such practices do not feature consistently across key stages.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Due to the variable quality of teaching, pupils currently lack the self-awareness needed to be attentive, successful learners who can challenge and motivate themselves. They are not confident in managing situations when learning tasks do not match their needs or interests. They will wait patiently and politely for periods of time or drift off-task without making gains in their learning.
- Pupils do not consistently take pride in their work. The quality of their writing and presentation of work across subjects varies. A small proportion of pupils said their work in reading, writing and mathematics is not challenging enough.
- The large majority of pupils who made their views known during the inspection agreed that bullying does not happen in their school. They were confident that adults would listen and take action to address any concerns they might have. A very small proportion of parents, however, expressed concerns about bullying. In addition, one or two pupils could not explain what forms bullying might take. This may hamper their ability to identify instances of bullying and look after themselves.

- The overwhelming majority of pupils feel safe in school. They make positive friendships easily, saying 'the people in school are nice' and 'teachers always look after you'.
- The large majority of parents agree that their child is safe and well looked after. Of the many positive parental comments offered during this inspection, several suggested that their children are 'excited to go to school each day'. Parents also said they find teachers 'friendly and approachable' and 'always willing to listen and help'.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy the additional responsibilities that the school affords them. Whether house captain or buddy, pupils execute their responsibilities well and with pride. In managing such roles, pupils develop personal and social skills. Their confidence and self-esteem are fostered effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Low-level disruption ensues where pupils' learning needs and interests are not met effectively. This hampers pupils' progress.
- Pupils' conduct around school during the inspection was sensible, even though cloakroom areas were congested and difficult for pupils to navigate. A small proportion of pupils told the inspector that behaviour in class is sometimes not as good as they would like. Their learning gets interrupted when pupils become 'silly' or noisy or arrive late to lessons.
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality are improving due to leaders' actions. Overall attendance has risen. The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has reduced and overall figures are close to national averages this year. Leaders are working closely with parents and pupils, particularly those who have SEN and/or disabilities, to ensure that all pupils continue to benefit from good attendance.
- Pupils have good manners and are respectful. They make visitors feel very welcome, shaking hands and holding doors open politely with no prompting from adults.
- Pupils get along well together outdoors, and different age groups play happily together. Older pupils particularly enjoy being buddies for Reception children and take this responsibility seriously.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in each key stage is not consistently good. Due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and assessment, pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are too variable over time.
- Work in pupils' books and the school's own assessment information show that too few pupils currently are reaching age-related standards in mathematics, reading and writing. In addition, compared to national averages, not enough pupils are working at greater depths of learning in each subject. From broadly typical starting points, this represents progress that is less than good.
- Not all pupils read frequently with adults in school. This inhibits the development of pupils' skills of reading fluency, decoding and comprehension. Consequently, the

proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding nationally expected standards over time is too low.

- In key stage 1 in 2017, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing was well below the national average. Only 38% of boys reached the expected standard. Just 4% of pupils reached a greater depth in writing, compared to 16% of pupils nationally.
- In key stage 2, progress and attainment for all pupils in reading have been in the bottom 20% of schools nationally for at least two years. In 2017, less than half of the pupils in Year 6 reached the expected standard in reading.
- Key stage 2 pupils' mathematics outcomes have also been in the bottom 20% for middle-ability pupils for at least two years. These outcomes mean that not all key stage 2 pupils are suitably prepared for the demands of the key stage 3 curriculum.
- Cohorts of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are too small to draw reliable comparisons with other schools. However, the work in pupils' books and assessment information provided by the school show variable rates of progress from pupils' different starting points.
- Pupils make good progress in their social, emotional and personal development in all key stages. Due to a carefully balanced curriculum, pupils are enabled to learn about careers and life beyond the school gates. They make particularly strong progress with regards to their personal ambitions and social interactions. Pupils aspire to be doctors, police officers, paramedics, vets and scientists. One child's insightful comments about 'individual liberty' and 'personal choice' captured the depth of pupils' understanding of British values. Pupils' positive outcomes and success in terms of becoming well-rounded, polite and caring individuals are clearly evident.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- From broadly typical starting points, children's progress and outcomes are not consistently good. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development in 2017 fell below the national average. Outcomes over time are too variable, with boys consistently doing less well than girls in the early years. Therefore, not all children are well prepared for the demands of the Year 1 curriculum.
- There has been instability in leadership of the early years over time. Leaders and governors have correctly identified practices that are less than good in the early years. They sought and have benefited from the support offered by local authority partners. The outdoor environment, for example, has been 'overhauled'. However, staffing changes, coupled with the variable quality of teaching, mean that there has only been partial success in securing improvement. The quality of leadership and teaching in the early years requires improvement.
- Teachers' assessment information is not used effectively to plan for children. Children receive too little challenge in their learning and work, especially in relation to the development of basic skills. Tasks and areas of provision do not effectively encourage children to practise or deepen their skills, knowledge and understanding in reading, writing and number. Teachers do not afford children enough opportunity to go beyond what they already know and can do in a consistent or reliable manner.

- Children's reading records show that not all children read frequently enough with adults in the early years. Despite leaders' and teachers' intention to read regularly with all children, this does not happen reliably in practice. Parents are tasked to read each night with their child and many do. However, the school's work to improve children's concepts of print and skills of decoding, fluency and comprehension is lacking in consistency and, therefore, effectiveness. The early years environment, indoors and outside, is not sufficiently rich in vocabulary or print to support and inspire children to read and write.
- Some teaching assistants are skilled in questioning children to deepen their learning and thinking. When deployed effectively, these members of staff make a positive difference to children's rates of progress.
- There are warm relationships throughout the early years. Parents, staff and children communicate well with one another. Parents appreciate teachers' availability and their care and kindness towards their child. One comment from a parent about the standard of care typified the views of others, saying, 'Staff put children at the heart of everything they do.'
- Welfare requirements are met. Adults are vigilant about children's safety and well-being. They understand their duties in terms of protecting and caring for children. Any concerns are followed up promptly and staff know what to look out for in order to protect children from harm.
- Children have lots of fun and are happy in the early years. There are smiles aplenty and cooperative play and secure friendships develop well. Children's behaviour and conduct are strengths of the early years. All children demonstrate respect for adults, responding promptly to any instructions or requests.
- The local authority adviser for early years continues to work well in partnership with the early years team. Together with the early years staff and leaders, they have ensured that the outdoor space is safe and enticing for children.

School details

Unique reference number	114043
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10047634

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Robson
Headteacher	Alison Spence
Telephone number	01207 508 237
Website	www.castleside.durham.sch.uk/
Email address	castleside@durhamlearning.net
Date of previous inspection	14–15 October 2014

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much smaller than typically found in other schools nationally.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is broadly similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is smaller than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

- The school runs a breakfast club and a number of extra-curricular clubs for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed across classes and key stages. The headteacher and/or deputy headteacher conducted observations jointly with the inspector.
- Meetings were held with a local authority partner, the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders, as well as governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector listened to some pupils read, scrutinised pupils' work and talked informally and formally with pupils in each key stage. The views of 26 pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire were also considered.
- A wide range of the school's own information and documentation was studied, including its self-evaluation, assessment information, improvement plans and records of the checks made on teaching and learning. Information about governance, including governors' minutes of meetings and safeguarding practices, was also examined, alongside policy documentation.
- The opinions of staff were taken into account via the 15 responses made by staff to Ofsted's questionnaire and through formal and informal face-to-face discussions.
- The inspector talked with several parents face-to-face during the inspection. The views expressed by 50 parents on the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, were considered and the 26 parents' comments communicated via free text were also examined by the inspector.

Inspection team

Fiona Manuel, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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