

Linton Primary School

Linton, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 5SG

Inspection dates

25–26 June 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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a school that has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils are happy and safe, and love school. Every person in school strives to ensure that it is a caring and nurturing place where pupils learn and thrive.
- Under the skilled leadership of the headteacher, the desire to provide the best possible teaching, outcomes and experiences for all pupils is tangible. As a result, the school continues to improve and flourish.
- Leaders are crystal clear about the school's strengths and areas for development. They are determined to eradicate underperformance so that all aspects of school are of the highest quality.
- Children, in the early years, make a good start to their learning. They make good progress and are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Outcomes for pupils are now good. Current pupils are making good progress from their individual starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Some pupils' attainment remains below that found nationally.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They respect and care for each other. Pupils are polite and display good manners. They freely and confidently engage in conversation.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. They are well prepared for the next step in their education. The wider curriculum develops pupils' curiosity and creativity, and fires their enthusiasm to learn very effectively.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have significant and ambitious aspirations to secure successful careers.
- The school has worked hard to improve pupils' rates of attendance with some success. These improvements need to continue so that fewer pupils are persistently absent.
- Because of consistently good teaching, pupils are learning quickly. Teachers and teaching assistants alike are skilled at supporting pupils' learning.
- Teachers generally match work accurately to pupils' varying abilities in reading, writing and mathematics. Opportunities for pupils in key stage 1 to use their mathematical reasoning skills are sparse.
- The school has worked hard to develop pupils' early reading skills and foster a love of reading. Currently not all pupils can write at length, both creatively and independently.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - making sure pupils' good and improving progress in their learning is matched by rising attainment, so that all pupils reach the standards of which they are capable
 - continuing to review and embed actions to improve pupils' rates of attendance so that there are fewer pupils who are persistently absent.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that pupils in key stage 1 have more opportunities to explain and justify their thinking in mathematical reasoning activities
 - embedding new approaches in the teaching of writing so that pupils can use their new and developing skills to write independently and creatively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment, the skilled and determined headteacher has been unwavering in her mission to secure an excellent standard of education for pupils in this school. She has worked with spirit and vigour to transform the culture of the school. She has been well supported by the recently strengthened governing body. All leaders are demonstrating a clear capacity to lead and accelerate current improvements, securing higher levels of attainment for pupils.
- Swift and decisive action to address weaknesses in the quality of provision has been taken. This has included the introduction of many new initiatives in teaching and effective partnership work with local colleagues. Work to secure consistently good-quality teaching is ongoing. Nevertheless, staff morale is high, and everyone works extremely hard to ensure that high-quality provision prevails.
- Until the appointment of the headteacher, the school's leadership and management had not adequately addressed weaknesses in the quality of teaching. This resulted in the standards reached by pupils in their work, and the rates of progress made in learning, falling below those found nationally. Many pupils were not fulfilling their potential.
- As a result of the leadership's ongoing improvements to the quality of teaching, current pupils are now making improved and increasingly strong progress in their learning. There has been too little time to see improved outcomes for key stage 2 pupils. Not all gaps have been plugged in a sizeable minority of pupils' knowledge and skills that have resulted from previously weaker teaching. Pupils' current attainment, especially in key stage 2, is low but rising quickly.
- Procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of the school's performance through checking the quality of teaching are incisive and forensic in detail. The headteacher's self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is frank and honest. Leaders know exactly what the current weaknesses are. This allows them to plan improvements to eliminate these weaknesses.
- The school development plan is extremely detailed and carefully monitors the effect of planned actions on outcomes for pupils in their learning. It is a comprehensive and well thought-through document. It closely matches actions to key issues identified in the school's self-evaluation. Regular checks, the scrutiny of actions and termly milestones to be reached ensure that no time is wasted to implement further improvements.
- The school's curriculum is underpinned by five values leaders have decided they want to see in all pupils. These values of perseverance, resilience, independence, tolerance and truth are woven through a whole-school four-year rolling programme of termly topics. The curriculum is also designed to promote pupils' self-esteem and raise their aspirations. Topics are supported by visits out of school and visitors who come into school. Broad-ranging themes allow pupils to investigate and become absorbed in learning at age-appropriate levels. Themes such as 'Mind over Matter', 'Fight for Survival', 'Incredible Journeys' and 'The Unknown Universe' stir curiosity and foster a love of discovering new things. Over the year, the school provides a range of after-school clubs that further enhance pupils' access to the wider curriculum. These include

coding, gardening, cookery, building using blocks and art.

- Leaders have worked hard to devise and implement a new system for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. Following careful analysis of this assessment information, leaders are now managing pupil premium spending effectively to provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils. The progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils, overall, now matches that of their classmates in most year groups. The pupil premium funding is used well.
- Effective leadership has resulted in good provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are supported well. Their needs are identified early and their progress, which is mainly good, is accurately analysed by leaders and teachers. Consequently, the special educational needs funding is used increasingly effectively by leaders.
- The physical education and sport funding for schools is also being used well. Health and well-being are seen by leaders as key to pupils being successful in their next school and for their life ahead. There is a drive to allow pupils to experience a wide range of sporting activities. These include gymnastics, hula hooping, tag rugby and 'yoga bugs'. Pupils can attend an after-school club to improve general fitness. They regularly complete a 'daily mile'. Swimming lessons are now part of the curriculum. Pupils complete personal survival grades in their swimming sessions, skills for life.
- As a result of many strategies and rewards such as the 'Linton Pound' scheme, rates of attendance are slowly rising. Leaders recognise that there is more to do to review, and adapt if necessary, current systems to ensure that pupils' attendance continues to improve.
- The school has benefited from good-quality support offered by the local authority, triggered by rigorous reviews of the school's performance. The headteacher highly values the opportunity to work alongside the school's improvement adviser.

Governance of the school

- The school now benefits from an increasingly skilled and proactive governing body. Governors have been honest about the decline of the school to a position where it required improvement. This has enabled them to learn from mistakes and develop an unrelenting focus on holding leaders to account. Governors are now effectively providing challenge and support to the headteacher.
- Governors regularly review their own effectiveness, including identifying strengths on which to build. They bring to the school a range of appropriate professional skills and experience, including in education. This enhances their effect on school improvement. Governors are pushing forward to become even more effective. They have a detailed action plan for their own improvement. Governors make it their business to know about the work of the school through regular visits. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that a culture of safeguarding is embedded among all staff. They are vigilant in their duty to keep pupils safe. Policies, procedures and records are of good quality. Staff training is thorough and up to date. This includes ensuring that all recruitment procedures are watertight. All adults have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for keeping children safe.
- Staff work tirelessly to ensure that pupils are safe and that their welfare is protected and nurtured. There is an ethos of vigilance. Staff are quick to identify, report and record any concerns, no matter how small. All concerns are followed through, robustly, by the headteacher. Staff know children and their families well in this small, community school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have been resolute in their work to continually improve the quality of teaching. This has been underpinned by improving staff morale and developing a buoyant sense of teamwork. Improved teaching has resulted in improving current pupils' progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Skilled teaching provides pupils with access to a rich and fascinating curriculum. Most lessons are fun and interesting. For example, the key stage 2 class were enthralled by using a tablet to control a programmable 'ball', remotely.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and stick closely to the school's behaviour policy. Relationships are good. Pupils' generally positive attitudes in lessons support their learning well. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled at managing the behaviour of all pupils, including those with SEND. This supports pupils' learning effectively.
- Pupils benefit from informative and exciting displays around the classrooms, including aide-memoires. These provide key information for current learning in mathematics, reading and writing. Shared areas also benefit from exciting displays. The newly stocked and renovated library area is inviting and inspiring. It effectively promotes a love of reading.
- In mathematics, basic skills of number and mental calculation are taught and consolidated regularly. Pupils in the key stage 2 class answered challenging questions about the number of degrees in an eighth of a turn. They successfully considered how many quarter turns are in 270 degrees and the number of quarter turns from south to east clockwise. In this class, mathematics problem-solving activities are well matched to pupils' abilities, including for the most able. Pupils are required to reason by explaining or proving their answers. Key stage 1 pupils' skills of mathematical reasoning are less well developed. They have few written opportunities to demonstrate or prove their thinking.
- As a result of the rigorous and systematic teaching of phonics, children are now getting off to a secure start in their reading in early years. Adults are skilled in teaching well-structured lessons throughout the school. These are pitched well in relation to pupils' reading skills. Reading books closely match pupils' phonetic knowledge.
- Teaching assistants are an important part of the school's teaching team. They are skilled at supporting pupils' learning, benefiting from good-quality professional

development and training opportunities. They display good questioning skills, have high expectations of pupils, take initiative and hold responsibility effectively. The 'literacy champion' is playing a pivotal role in the improving standards in English, especially reading.

- A concerted push to improve standards in writing is beginning to have results. Many pupils still lack the confidence to write independently, and at length. New approaches in the teaching of writing need to be embedded so that pupils can routinely write creatively and with flair.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school places pupils' physical and emotional well-being as a high priority, and works very effectively to ensure that these are continually being developed. The sense of care and nurturing is tangible. Displays around school are not solely academic. Some help pupils to understand the importance of sleep. Others show how pupils may feel 'inside' when they are worried or upset. There are also some pupils' suggestions of how to 'swat worries away' by perhaps singing or rolling in flowers!
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils grow in confidence during their time in school, acquiring an increasingly confident approach to learning. Pupils are proud of their achievements. They told the inspector about winning a competition to attend a young architects' event at the 'Baltic' in Newcastle. One display showed pupils winning a computer for school by writing a poem as part of Northumberland County Council's Holocaust Memorial Day.
- Pupils said that they feel very safe in school, a view echoed by all parents and carers through the school's questionnaire, and by staff in Ofsted's staff questionnaire, Parent View. Pupils talked confidently to the inspector about their knowledge of e-safety. Pupils show high levels of respect and care for each other. They value their classmates' opinions and work cooperatively in lessons. Pupils are encouraged to have high personal aspirations and ambitions – to 'dream big'.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and development are highly successful. The curriculum is supported by a detailed and thoroughly planned programme of assemblies. They cover events such as special celebration days for music, refugees, anti-bullying and 'World Book Day'. Assemblies also explore other cultures and faiths, such as the Year of the Pig as part of Chinese New Year. All key stage 2 pupils are learning to play the cornet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils enjoy coming to school, as can be seen in their improving attendance. Although rates of attendance over time have been below those found nationally, there has been a steady improvement over the last year. A small number of pupils are still persistently absent. The school continues to work hard to address this issue. There are now no groups of pupils at a disadvantage through

lower rates of attendance. Pupils and parents understand the effect of missing time in school to learn. The school recognises it needs to continue to improve pupils' rates of attendance.

- Pupils enjoy their learning and mostly work conscientiously. Behaviour systems encourage positive attitudes to learning, and the few incidents of misbehaviour are swiftly and deftly addressed. Occasionally, a small minority of pupils lose concentration and become disengaged from learning. In conversation with the inspector, pupils were crystal clear that behaviour is good in school, and that there is no bullying at all. They stated that occasional disputes and arguments are sorted out quickly.
- The good relationships that are nurtured ensure that pupils usually conduct themselves well in lessons and around school. Most pupils are polite and have good manners, holding doors open for adults and visitors. They are happy and confident to engage in conversation with adults, including the inspector. Playtimes are harmonious occasions where pupils play happily together. No-one is left out.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In all key stages, pupils are now making consistently strong progress in English and mathematics. A large majority of pupils are on track to reach standards expected, or above, for their age by the end of the year. There remains some variation between cohorts due to very small pupil numbers.
- Most children begin the Reception class with skills and knowledge at levels below those expected for their age. They make good progress, so that the proportion that reach a good level of development is improving. After a good start to learning in the early years, pupils are now making good progress in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Although current standards of attainment are broadly in line with those found nationally, it is not possible to make any reliable comparison due to very small numbers.
- Pupils also make a good start in their early reading skills. In recent years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has been broadly average.
- Based on the school's current assessment, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are improving for most pupils in key stage 2. This is because they are making strong progress in their learning. Work seen in books during the inspection matches the school's assessment of pupils' standards. Improvements in teaching are reflected in improving outcomes for pupils, although there were no Year 6 pupils last year. Although pupils' attainment is rising, it remains below average.
- Over time, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils has been broadly in line with other pupils in the school and is similarly improving. As the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in each year group is very small, statistical comparisons are unreliable. The school is working hard to support the learning of all its pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.
- The school is quick to identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Effective leadership and good-quality provision for pupils with SEND ensure that most of these pupils make good progress from their starting points.

- The achievement of the most able pupils is improving. A greater number of pupils are on track to reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics this year in most year groups. Across the school, not all most-able pupils have reached their full potential over time.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in the school's early years enjoy the good-quality learning opportunities provided for them, and they learn and play happily together. They are eager to explore and investigate, are happy to share and take turns and they display good behaviour. The children engage well in all activities, both inside and outside. They benefit from working alongside older pupils.
- Adults working in the setting are adept in developing the learning provided for children. This learning is based on accurate assessment of the children's stages of development, and usually maximises learning opportunities for all. Staff have worked hard to ensure that the indoor learning environments are of good quality. The children clearly love being outdoors, whether it is a sunny or rainy day.
- Most children start in the early years with skills and knowledge which are below those expected for their age. As a result of careful observations, choice of activities, good teaching and probing questioning, most children in the early years make good progress and are well prepared to start Year 1. The very small number of children's achievement is improving across the early years.
- Adults in the setting observe children carefully, and skilfully build on their interests to plan the next steps in learning. They support children well through prompts and skilful questioning. They work alongside children during imaginative and creative play sessions. Children show persistence in learning and mainly stick to tasks. They display good levels of cooperation. Most are inquisitive and curious and enjoy playing and exploring together.
- The school has strong and effective links with parents. Most parents are extremely supportive of the school, and work in partnership to support their child's learning. The school's online interactive portal, when operational, allows it to share important moments of learning. Parents reciprocate by uploading contributions from home.
- Safeguarding practices are very effective. Children are taught how to manage risks from an early age, and the very effective safeguarding culture that permeates the school is equally apparent in the early years. There are no material breaches of legal welfare requirements; children are safe and well supported. Children are provided with appropriate clothing when outside and remember their hats when it is sunny.

School details

Unique reference number	122199
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10087544

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Watson
Headteacher	Mrs Samantha Mason
Telephone number	01670 860 361
Website	www.linton.northumberland.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@linton.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 March 2017

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for support from pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is also above average.
- Reception children attend on a full-time basis. Currently there are no pre-school children.
- There were no Year 6 pupils last year.
- The headteacher has a part-time teaching commitment in both classes.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in lessons, including lessons observed jointly with the headteacher and one taught by the headteacher. In addition, the inspector reviewed a sample of pupils' work alongside the headteacher.
- The inspector held meetings with governors and the headteacher. The inspector held a meeting with a group of pupils and held a discussion with the school improvement adviser. He also met with the vice-chair of governors to discuss the school's use of the pupil premium funding and sports funding.
- The inspector viewed a range of documents including information relating to pupils' achievements over time, the school's data on recent and current progress of pupils, and the school's view on how well it is doing. He also reviewed the school development plan, documents relating to safeguarding and records of behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector took account of the school's questionnaire for parents as there were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View. He also considered the six responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 18 responses to the pupil questionnaire. In addition, parents' comments, via the free-text facility, were also analysed. The school's website was also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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