

Slaley First School

Slaley Village, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 0AA

Inspection dates

3–4 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher's leadership is very effective; together with other leaders and the governing body, she has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils behave very well both in and out of class. Pupils say that they feel very safe and that bullying is extremely rare.
- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. Strong teachers' subject knowledge and their enthusiasm are key factors in good teaching.
- Early years provision is good. Strong teamwork and effective leadership ensure that children thrive and achieve well.
- Pupils' achievement is good. From broadly typical starting points, pupils in Year 4 reach standards that are above those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The governing body makes an important contribution to school improvement. Governors know the school well and use their skills and expertise effectively to provide strategic direction for the work of the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and is promoted very well through an impressive range of activities. Throughout their time in school, pupils become confident young citizens, well prepared for life in the world in which they live.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The outstanding practice which is evident in the school is not consistently shared among all staff.
- The teaching of mathematics is not as strong as that of reading and writing because pupils' basic mathematical knowledge and skills are not learnt securely throughout the school.
- Teachers do not insist that pupils make the improvements they suggest when marking their work.
- Middle leaders do not have sufficient opportunities to check on the progress of their action plans.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes. One observation was conducted jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also observed pupils' conduct at breaks and lunchtimes and attended an assembly.
- The inspector listened to pupils in Years 2 and 4 read and observed the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make).
- Discussions were held with pupils in Year 4, members of the school council, parents, governors and a representative of the local authority. The inspector also met with leaders within the school including the leader of early years, the special educational needs coordinator and middle leaders.
- The inspector took account of the 34 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). He also considered the 11 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector examined a wide range of documents including pupils' workbooks, information about pupil progress, information about the monitoring of teaching and learning, the school's development plan and views of its own performance. He also examined records of governors' visits to the school, minutes of governing body meetings, records of attendance and behaviour and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

Peter Evea, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Slaley is much smaller than the average-sized first school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is much lower than average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The majority of pupils are White British and no children in 2014 spoke English as an additional language.
- Children attend the Nursery class on a part-time basis and the Reception class on a full-time basis.
- There has been a period of staffing turbulence in the last two years with several changes, including the appointment of a new headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the role of middle leaders by giving them opportunities to check on the progress of their action plans.
- Improve teaching further so that it is outstanding and so raise attainment, especially in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that pupils' basic mathematical skills are thoroughly mastered
 - making sure that pupils always make the improvements suggested by teachers when they mark their work
 - sharing the best teaching practice with others across the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school is led by a very effective headteacher who has carefully and skilfully guided the school through a period of significant change. Supported by the staff and governors, she has brought about improvements in teaching and behaviour since the last inspection. She has a very clear vision of how she wishes to improve the school and the impact of her work can be seen throughout the school.
- There is very strong teamwork among staff and all share the same commitment to ensuring the best for pupils. Middle leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the areas for which they are responsible, and produce effective action plans to address these. However, they do not yet have enough opportunities to check on progress and success of the actions identified.
- Leaders are regularly involved in checking and evaluating the quality of teaching. Staff are held to account through regular pupil progress meetings and leaders ensure that any underachievement is promptly addressed so that pupils make as much progress as they can. Leaders recognise that progress in mathematics is not as strong as it is in English and are putting in place a more consistent calculation policy.
- Leaders place an emphasis on improving the quality of teaching. There are effective procedures for appraising staff performance and all staff have targets linked to school priorities, including pupils' progress. There are opportunities for staff to visit other schools in order to develop their skills. However, outstanding practice is not yet fully shared across the school to benefit the quality of teaching overall.
- Leaders know the school well and the headteacher demonstrates an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. This was shown through a lesson that was jointly observed with the inspector. Leaders have fully addressed all the issues raised in the previous inspection, particularly in raising standards in writing and creating a creative curriculum. As a result, they demonstrate a strong capacity to improve the school still further.
- This is a very caring and inclusive school where all the pupils are cherished and enabled to access all the school has to offer. Good relations are fostered well and there are no signs of discrimination; staff work hard to ensure that all groups of pupils, no matter how small, do as well as they can, for example in removing any gaps between those pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding and their peers.
- Parents and carers have a very positive view of the school and more than three quarters of the families with children at the school responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View). All indicated that they would recommend the school to other parents and carers.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and caters very well for the individual needs of pupils, particularly in relation to developing their literacy and numeracy skills. It allows pupils to develop a very good understanding of traditional British values and prepares them very well for life in modern Britain. There is an impressive range of opportunities for pupils to engage in additional activities and clubs. During the inspection, the after-school gymnastics club was very well attended and the popular Mandarin language club has a waiting list.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding has been used well to promote pupils' physical development and extend sporting opportunities. Support is provided by specialist coaches to enhance teachers' skills in teaching a range of sports. The learning that takes place in a nearby forest is particularly appreciated and does much to promote healthy lifestyles.
- Safeguarding and child protection systems and procedures meet all national requirements and are regularly reviewed. Staff are rigorous in ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable children.
- The local authority has provided much-appreciated support, particularly in helping the school to reorganise its staffing structure. It has a clear overview of the school's performance and readily acknowledges the strong leadership of the headteacher in moving the school forward.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to making sure that the school becomes as good as it can be and carry out their responsibilities very effectively. Governors have an accurate view of the school's performance and can identify its strengths and areas for development. They bring a wide range of skills; where there are gaps, they seek training and strategically recruit governors with the necessary skills. Governors have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and they oversee the arrangements for the management of teachers' performance so that only good teaching is rewarded and any weaknesses are tackled.
 - Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, particularly in relation to safeguarding. They make sure that the pupil premium funding is prudently spent so that it has a positive impact on the progress of eligible pupils, and they ensure that additional sports funding is used effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave very well both in and out of class. They are polite and courteous at all times and welcome visitors warmly. They are proud to be members of their school community, which they describe as being like one big family.
- The school, in consultation with the pupils, has introduced a new system for managing pupils' behaviour which is well understood and consistently applied. Pupils say that if a disagreement should occur, they would try to resolve it themselves before involving an adult.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and join in activities with enthusiasm, particularly when work captures their interest and imagination. Just occasionally, a very small number of pupils need gentle correction.
- Pupils have numerous opportunities to become involved in the running of the school. Older pupils act as playtime buddies and there is a very active school council. Older pupils also help younger pupils with their reading; no matter what they are doing, they take their responsibilities very seriously.
- Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare and they know that they can seek help from an adult if they have a worry or concern. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber and homophobic bullying, and are adamant that this would be challenged by adults if it ever occurred.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All parents and carers who responded to the online inspection questionnaire and the parents spoken to throughout the inspection agreed that the school keeps their children safe.
- There are clear procedures in place to safeguard pupils and to follow up accidents. Appropriate risk assessments are in place; through their learning in the local forest, pupils develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. They are also aware of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- All arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet all current requirements.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. It is good and there is some that is outstanding. The improved quality of teaching has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement, particularly in writing.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together and form strong teams. Teaching assistants support individuals and small groups very well and help pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers use the information they have about pupils' progress to plan tasks which mostly build on the skills and knowledge pupils have, and activities usually match pupils' abilities accurately. This is particularly true in literacy lessons. However, in mathematics lessons, pupils do not always securely master the basic skills and knowledge that would provide a secure foundation for later learning. As a result, pupils are slower to solve problems and are less accurate than they should be.
- Pupils get off to a good start in learning to read and their skills are built on as they move through the school. Pupils are given ample opportunities to read in school and many say that they read frequently at home. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and told the inspector how much they were looking forward to World Book Day.
- Pupils write well and at increasing length as they build on the skills they learn early in their school life. They write in literacy lessons but also see writing as a tool to use in other subjects. They respond eagerly to subjects that catch their interest and are given regular first-hand experiences to write about. In the mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class, for example, pupils eagerly chose model figures of animals found on the savannah to write descriptions, including adjectives and time connectives of a procession of animals.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide useful next steps that would help pupils to improve their work. However, teachers do not always insist that pupils make these improvements; therefore, pupils do not always learn from their mistakes and progress is sometimes slower than it might be.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge and their infectious enthusiasm motivates pupils and makes them want to learn. In a Years 3 and 4 French lesson, pupils' real enjoyment was obvious as they attempted to beat their class target for counting to 20 and they became intrigued by the links between French, English and Latin words when learning the days of the week.

- Classrooms are stimulating environments and all adults work hard to form constructive relationships built on mutual respect. As a result, pupils say how great their teachers are and how much they help them to learn.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children start Nursery with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. They make good progress. The school's data and pupils' work shows that attainment in reading and writing and mathematics by the end of Year 4 is now typically above that expected for their age, particularly in reading and writing. Standards in mathematics, while above average, are not as high as in reading and writing.
- Pupils' learning in lessons is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and they quickly gain the knowledge and skills in reading and writing they need to help them improve further. However, they do not completely master all the basic skills and knowledge necessary for successful mathematical learning; as a result, their progress in mathematics is slower because they sometimes take too long to carry out calculations and they make unnecessary errors.
- Pupils enjoy their reading. In 2014, all pupils achieved the expected level in the national phonics check. Pupils use their phonics knowledge well (sounds and the letters they represent) to tackle unfamiliar words, and, as a result, are reading above expected levels for their age. Pupils are encouraged to read and do so frequently.
- Pupils are given frequent opportunities to write throughout the school, based on first-hand experiences whenever possible. As they develop their skills, they write at increasing length and with greater accuracy for a range of purposes. Examples of good writing brighten many display areas and there are examples of pupils choosing to write for the sheer pleasure of it.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar good progress to their peers. Their needs are accurately identified and they are supported by skilled and committed staff, usually within the classroom.
- The most-able pupils make good progress, particularly in reading and writing. Pupils read at levels beyond their chronological age and their writing shows a maturity of style. However, their progress in mathematics is slower because although they understand the mathematical processes, their insecure basic skills and knowledge result in unnecessary errors.
- In Year 2 in 2014, there were too few pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding to report on their attainment without identifying individuals. The additional funding is used well to increase the amount of support for eligible pupils throughout the school and to purchase resources and specific programmes to promote their skills. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is similar to, and sometimes better than, that of their classmates.

The early years provision

is good

- Children join the Nursery class with the skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. They make good progress so that the vast majority of children reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. The very small number of children who join with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age and who have particular needs are very well supported; they too make good progress from their lower starting points.
- An effective leader has created a close-knit team whose members all share the same determination to make sure that children are able to flourish. Together they plan activities which are interesting and which make the children want to learn more. During the inspection, children were absorbed in learning about pets and the adventures of Spotty Dog. The leader has an accurate picture of the strengths and also of the areas to improve further.
- Children settle in quickly and get off to a rapid start. This is due in part to the well-thought-out transition arrangements but also because the Nursery children learn alongside the Reception children. They quickly absorb the routines and practices that help the early years to run smoothly. In the afternoon, the Reception children join with the Year 1 and Year 2 class and this helps with the transition from early years to Key Stage 1. The Years 1 and 2 teacher also teaches part-time in the early years; as a result, the children know her well and she knows them well too.
- Behaviour is good. Children enjoy what they do and parents say how eager their children are to come to school. Adults model and insist on appropriate behaviour and children respond well. They play and learn well together and are eager to show visitors what they are learning about.

- Safety is of high importance to all, especially when children learn outside and in the nearby forest area, which they love. There are very well-thought-out systems in place to keep everyone safe at all times, especially at the end of the school day.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122227
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	449762

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	M Rastall
Headteacher	Rebecca Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2009
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