

Inspection of Norham St Ceolwulf's C of E Controlled First School

West Street, Norham-on-Tweed, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland TD15 2JZ

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are safe, happy and educated well at this small and rural first school. Relationships between pupils, their families and their teachers are caring and supportive. Adults who work in the school know every pupil well. Any worries that pupils have are picked up quickly and sorted out effectively.

Staff have high expectations of the pupils who attend this school. Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, the gaps in pupils' knowledge are being filled quickly. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) helps these pupils to learn well.

Pupils behave well in and around school. They help each other out in lessons and play together cooperatively at breaktimes. Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. They undertake charitable work enthusiastically. They look forward to reading with the residents of a local care home.

There has been a sea change in all aspects of this school's work since the last inspection. Parents and carers recognise and appreciate the improvements that the school has made. A typical comment, echoing the views of many, was, 'A lot of change has gone on at the school over the last couple of years and it has improved immensely.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has adopted a new curriculum since the last inspection. This new curriculum is well designed. It includes the subject-specific vocabulary that should be learned at each stage. The curriculum is taught by well-trained staff. It is supported by high-quality texts and by educational visits. Most recently, pupils reinforced their learning about art with a visit to a local exhibition.

The new curriculum is well established in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils' learning in these subjects is checked regularly. Any gaps in their knowledge are addressed straight away. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make rapid progress through the curriculums in these subjects. In some other subjects, however, the curriculum is at an earlier stage of development. Pupils have gaps in their knowledge of these subjects.

Reading is of a high priority from the Nursery Year to Year 4. The library is brimming with interesting and age-appropriate books for the pupils to read. Teachers read a rich variety of texts to their classes. Children in the early years progress well through the school's phonics programme, as do the pupils in Year 1. Staff ensure that reading books are matched precisely to the sounds that pupils have learned. Well-trained staff check on pupils' phonics knowledge frequently. Extra help and teaching time are given to pupils who find reading tricky. In Year 2 and beyond, pupils read confidently, fluently and for pleasure.

Adults in the early years model clear spoken language throughout the school day. They ask age-appropriate questions of the children and give them time to think, construct a sentence and reply. As a result, children's speaking and listening skills develop well.

The provision for pupils with SEND is of high quality. Pupils' individual needs are identified more carefully and supported more effectively than in the past. Pupils with SEND progress through the curriculum very well.

Pupils enter the school happily and punctually at the start of the school day. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere. Pupils listen well and work hard in lessons. Playtimes are positive times. Adults supervise the pupils as they play games, use play equipment and read books. Lunchtimes are harmonious. In the dining hall, pupils sit in 'family groups' and socialise with each other well. The school offers exceptional care for its pupils.

Pupils are steeped in the school's values throughout the academic year. This term's value of 'endurance' is well understood. Pupils appreciate the need to become more resilient in order to overcome any problems that they may meet. Pupils learn about the fundamental British values. For example, they understand the rule of law and they correctly identify actions that are right or wrong. Pupils are tolerant of each other's individual differences. However, pupils' knowledge of religions other than Christianity, and about the make-up of different families, is limited.

Leaders have overseen rapid school improvement since the last inspection. Shared curriculum leadership has impacted positively on staff's well-being and workload. Members of the governing body give of their time generously. They fulfil their statutory duties diligently. However, at times, governors do not provide incisive challenge to the school. This hampers their ability to help the school to make further improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculum is not fully embedded. This means that older pupils have gaps in their knowledge of these subjects. The school should ensure that as the curriculum is further developed, these gaps are revisited so that older pupils learn all that they should.
- The governing body is recently established. It does not challenge the school incisively enough. The school should ensure that governors have the expertise that they need to carry out this aspect of their role effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	135064
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10346400
Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Douglas Watkin
Headteacher	Gary Hilton
Website	www.norham.northumberland.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 September 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined The Tweed Learning Federation on 1 September 2024. The two schools in the federation share one governing body, an executive headteacher and curriculum leadership.
- Norham St Ceolwulf's C of E Controlled First School is included in Northumberland County Council's proposals to change from a three- to a two-tier education system in North Northumberland from 1 September 2025.
- This first school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are educated in two mixed-age classes.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support for SEND is well above average.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Church of England Diocese of Newcastle. Its most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in February 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place within eight years of that date.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher and other leaders.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. She also spoke with the school's improvement adviser and a diocesan representative.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Belita Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Simon Ward

Ofsted Inspector

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