

Prudhoe Castle First School

Castle Road, Prudhoe, Northumberland NE42 6PH

Inspection dates

22–23 May 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

- The headteacher and other leaders, including governors, are highly ambitious and have a clear vision for the school. They set high standards and expectations for everyone.
- Governors consistently challenge the school and hold all leaders to account for pupils' outcomes. They know the school very well.
- The work of the school around personal development and welfare is outstanding. Parents highly praise the support given to their children and the sense of family and community within the school.
- In almost all year groups, current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their different starting points.
- However, the most able pupils in lower key stage 1 are not, as yet, consistently achieving the standards of which they are capable in writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well because their barriers to learning are quickly identified and checks on their achievement are thorough and accurate.
- The curriculum is well planned. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is promoted effectively.
- Children achieve well in early years and are well prepared for Year 1 because of good leadership and teaching.
- Pupils benefit greatly from the caring and family ethos in all aspects of school life. Pupils are confident, happy and extremely well cared for.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan interesting and stimulating lessons. Pupils are encouraged to explain and extend their answers through challenging questioning.
- Pupils behave extremely well, both in their lessons and at other times of the day. Pupils are respectful towards each other. Instances of bullying are very rare.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Pupils say that they feel safe.
- Pupils' current standards in science and topic work are good. Pupils experience high-quality learning opportunities that extend and develop subject-specific skills and knowledge.
- Leadership roles within the school have been developed and the impact can be seen in the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' standards. However, further support is needed to extend the role of middle leaders and their impact at a whole-school level.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop middle leaders' skills in monitoring and developing their subjects to have a greater impact on whole-school standards.
- Improve teaching and learning, by ensuring that the work set for the most able pupils, particularly those in lower key stage 1, is consistently challenging in writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and have developed a strong vision of high aspirations and expectations. Staff within the school share this vision and it is equally supported by parents and carers.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's performance because of their ongoing and accurate monitoring and evaluation procedures. They identify those areas of the school's work that need further development, and take action as appropriate. The headteacher is clear about the standards expected in school and is taking effective steps to make sure that all pupils receive the high-quality education they deserve.
- Leaders make sure that pupils' progress is monitored carefully. There is a planned programme across the school year where they use detailed evidence to check that pupils are making the best progress they can. When pupils are identified as not making progress, additional tailored support and teaching are quickly put into place.
- Staff are provided with high-quality training and support to further develop the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They value this, and in Ofsted's online questionnaire all teachers agreed that they are well supported and that leaders do everything to ensure that everyone is motivated and valued.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to explore and celebrate festivals from different faiths, and pupils undertake fundraising opportunities for charities. All adults promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively and it is shown clearly in the quality of relationships within the school and the sense of community and family that is highly valued by parents.
- All leaders and managers, including governors, see developing and promoting British values as an essential part of the school's work. Pupils are helped to understand the value of community and that they play a part in making it a positive place for everyone to be part of. Pupils are encouraged to care for their immediate community and have taken part, for example, in a local clean-up campaign by going litter picking. The school sees that pupils' understanding and acceptance of difference is an integral part of the curriculum just as it is an integral part of life in Britain today.
- Pupils enjoy a wide curriculum, which is designed to make sure that it provides many varied and appropriate opportunities for pupils to benefit from. The curriculum is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it is addressing the needs and interests of the pupils in each year group. Teachers spoken to feel confident and well supported by leaders to 'take risks' with the curriculum and challenge themselves to look at new ways of making sure pupils make the best progress possible.
- The school benefits from a good level of support from the local authority. They have supported the school in moderating outcomes and further developing the quality of teaching and learning.
- Performance management is managed and led effectively and staff are set appropriately challenging and measurable targets that are directly linked to the school's

priorities. The headteacher has developed a clear culture that every member of staff is responsible for the learning and outcomes for all pupils and that everyone is a 'leader of learning'.

- Physical education and sports funding is used very effectively to raise staff's and pupils' expertise. A specialist teacher works with all pupils every week and provides access to a number of additional sporting activities.
- Leaders, including governors, make sure that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. It is used, for example, to provide personalised interventions and support across key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 and to help families and their children access additional activities.
- The role of middle leaders is being developed across the school by the headteacher. However, currently, their impact is not fully at a strategic whole-school level and further support is required.
- Parents are very positive about the school and believe it is well led and managed. Of those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and free-text service, all would recommend the school to another parent.

Governance of the school

- Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Following a period of turbulence through changes in staffing and leadership, they now celebrate the school's cohesive staff, well-behaved pupils and welcoming culture of care.
- Members of the governing body possess a wide range of skills and experience, which they use effectively to support the work of the headteacher and staff in school. They recognise the need to ensure that they are continuously updating their knowledge of local and national issues through taking part in regular training.
- Governors constantly make sure that they listen to the needs of parents and children and respond appropriately and take action as necessary. This has helped to increase the number of parents who are making Prudhoe Castle First School their school of choice.
- The records of governors' meetings show that governors challenge and contribute well to the school's improvement planning. Leaders are held to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as the quality of outcomes for pupils seen in statutory tests and internal data. Governors are passionate about seeing all pupils fulfil their true potential.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a very strong culture of safeguarding, which is rigorously upheld by all staff within the school.
- The school knows its pupils very well and detailed records are kept about all safeguarding concerns. Staff are tenacious in accessing appropriate guidance and

support from outside agencies for their pupils and families.

- The designated lead for safeguarding is extremely knowledgeable about pupils and their families. As a result, support for pupils is provided quickly and effectively, enabling issues to be dealt with as soon as they occur.
- Leaders ensure that they follow appropriate systems and procedures when recruiting new staff. Records of checks carried out on new staff are secure.
- Staff receive training for safeguarding during their induction into the school. This is followed up by regular updates for all staff. They have a very good understanding of the statutory guidance for keeping pupils safe and an informed understanding of any local risks to pupils. Staff are vigilant. Pupils clearly describe how the care of staff positively enhances their well-being.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders, including governors, have worked effectively to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to improve across the school and this enables pupils to make good progress in their learning.
- Teachers are positive and form good working relationships with their pupils. A calm and purposeful atmosphere in classrooms ensures that all pupils are encouraged to do well.
- Teachers and their assistants are enthusiastic and hardworking. They are passionate about their work and ambitious for their pupils' achievement. There is clear evidence of the positive impact this has on pupils' self-confidence, resilience and attitudes towards learning as they progress through school. Pupils work hard in lessons and are able to tackle new and increasingly challenging material. They are very proud of the work they produce and are keen to be involved in learning, sharing their ideas with their peers.
- Teachers use questioning well. They wait patiently for pupils to give full and reasoned answers to their questions. Teachers ask challenging questions and this makes pupils think about their learning and explain their reasoning. For example, pupils in a key stage 2 mathematics lesson were able to explain clearly how they could measure the perimeter of compound shapes and which method of approach had been the most effective and efficient. Questioning is a strength throughout the school.
- Adults reinforce high expectations of behaviour and, as a result, very few pupils were seen by the inspector, during observations of learning, as being off task. Pupils are very positive about the support they receive from their teachers and enjoy being challenged.
- Teachers set interesting tasks that motivate pupils to do their best. Opportunities are regularly taken to help pupils link different aspects of learning across subjects. For example, after exploring their understanding of modern-day Greece, pupils in Years 3 and 4 were able to develop their understanding of how Ancient Greeks have contributed to its current position.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Pupils are given regular opportunities to develop their numeracy skills through reasoning and problem-solving. Pupils use calculation skills that they have learned previously to solve increasingly complex

mathematical problems. Pupils are eager to develop their learning and as a group in key stage 1 noted, 'We know when we need to move on and try something more difficult.'

- The teaching of phonics is carefully developed across the school and particularly in early years. Pupils are given many opportunities to experience good-quality texts that extend their skills. Pupils are confident readers and clearly enjoy their reading experiences both in school and at home. This is reflected in the good progress they make throughout the school and particularly in key stage 1.
- Across all subjects, teachers are very aware of the need to develop pupils' language skills, both spoken and written. Every opportunity is taken to extend their learning, including by providing pupils with challenging texts, providing opportunities to talk through ideas before beginning to write, and teachers themselves modelling the quality of language required.
- Teachers share good practice and take opportunities to learn from one another and from other schools. They continuously check pupils' learning carefully and identify what pupils need to know next. However, teachers do not always challenge the most able pupils enough to make sure they are making the best progress possible, particularly in writing in lower key stage 1.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Relationships within the school are excellent. Staff and pupils act with respect for each other at all times.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils spoken to value their education and appreciate what Prudhoe Castle First School can provide for them. This has a strong impact on the progress they make within school. Pupils spoken to have high aspirations for their futures and feel that their school gives them the opportunity to do anything. One pupil in key stage 1 stated that by coming to school they were able to 'go out and explore the world'.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that any concerns or issues to do with safety would be dealt with very quickly by an adult. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including online, both in school and at home.
- This is an inclusive school where pupils feel valued and respected. Pupils spoken to, including those who took part in the pupil online survey, all see their school as being a warm and welcoming place where they are listened to and where all adults will care for them.
- Pupils of all ages recognise the need to be challenged in their work to ensure that they make the best progress possible in their learning. They talk confidently about how they enjoy challenging tasks across a range of subject areas and the new skills and knowledge they develop as a result. Parents recognise how the school develops key life skills to enable their children to be successful in school and in later life. As one parent stated, 'Teaching and pastoral care at the school are fantastic. Students have been

taught about resilience and mind sets within school, which supports them in striving for excellence despite challenges.'

- Pupils are very aware of what bullying means and know what different forms it can take. All pupils spoken to do not feel that bullying happens in their school but that if it did it would be dealt with very quickly and appropriately.
- The school is tenacious in working with a range of agencies to make sure that families and their children receive the best possible advice and guidance to support their emotional and physical well-being. Strong relationships have been developed with families by leaders and staff in school and, as a result, parents are confident to share any concerns, knowing that they will receive the support and care they need.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the need to treat everybody fairly and this is shown in their ability from a very young age to welcome and support all newcomers and visitors into their school. They have a strong awareness of their own identity and show respect for the similarities and differences in others. As one pupil in Year 4 explained, 'Difference is important because otherwise the world would be very boring!'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The culture of high expectations generated by leaders and all staff is demonstrated through pupils' positive attitudes. Pupils respond quickly to requests made of them by staff because of the excellent relationships that exist. Simple and effective systems of rewards and sanctions promote pupils' good behaviour.
- Pupils are particularly respectful and considerate towards others. The inspector witnessed pupils' kind nature in assisting their peers during breaktimes and helping one another with their work. For example, 'pupil buddies' actively support younger pupils during breaktimes to help develop their confidence and ability to play and interact with others. Additionally, pupils earnestly welcome visitors, as they are very proud of their school and their achievements.
- Pupils understand that poor behaviour can have an impact on their learning and that it is important not only to manage their own behaviour but also to help others. As a result, disruption within classrooms or around the schools is extremely rare.
- The school is an orderly and calm environment that is well cared for by both pupils and adults. Opportunities are taken around the school to celebrate pupils' work and pupils are extremely eager to show visitors what they have achieved.
- Pupils move easily around the building in a purposeful way and know clearly that there are rules and procedures, which they follow consistently. There are no raised voices from adults in school and in turn pupils respond overall in a similar way.
- Pupils are happy to come to school and they understand the need to be in school so that they can learn. Current attendance figures confirm this.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above

national standards. Current assessment information shows that children continue to make good progress with an increasing number exceeding the early learning goals. This is due to the strength in leadership in the early years provision and good teaching.

- In 2018, a higher than average proportion of pupils in Year 2 achieved at the expected standard and at greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics. This was as a result of targeted work by leaders since the school's last inspection, to strengthen teaching and ultimately improve outcomes.
- Work in books, accurate assessments and monitoring demonstrate that, currently, a high proportion of pupils continue to achieve at the expected standard in all three areas and at greater depth in reading and mathematics in key stage 1. However, in writing, the highest-attaining pupils, particularly in lower key stage 1, are not always provided with regular opportunities to write at a higher and more challenging level. Leaders are aware and actions are already underway to address this issue.
- As pupils move into key stage 2, they continue to make good progress across reading, writing and mathematics and also the wider curriculum. Pupils make particularly strong progress in topic work and science.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils in each year group is too small to report on without the risk of identification. However, the work in current pupils' books in writing, mathematics, reading and the wider curriculum indicates that they make good progress. They make the same good progress as other pupils in school.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2018 was above the national average and increasing over time. Pupils currently are making good progress across all year groups in reading. This is as a result of targeted teaching of phonics, particularly in Reception, and an ongoing focus on extending and developing pupils' reading throughout the school.
- The number of pupils with SEND in each year group is too small to report on without the risk of identification. However, the greater majority of these pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. This is the result of the strength in leadership of SEND, the early identification of needs as soon as pupils enter the school, and support that addresses effectively pupils' barriers to learning.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in the early years make good progress and the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above the national average in 2018. Children's starting points on entry to school, however, do vary, due to the variation in numbers attending year on year. Children are increasingly beginning school with low scores on a number of baseline assessment areas, including language, communication and personal and social skills. However, through good teaching, the provision of rich learning experiences and, where appropriate, targeted additional support, children are currently making at least good progress and are prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- The leader for the early years unit is highly skilled and knows the provision extremely well. The provision's strengths are accurately identified and precise plans are in place to bring about continuous improvements. Staff are given clear direction for the planning and provision of children's learning.

- All adults know the children extremely well and always show a high level of care for them. Relationships between adults and children are strong and these are reinforced by a warm and welcoming environment. Children are very tolerant of each other and demonstrate cooperation both in their learning and when they socialise together. As with the rest of the school, the early years provision is fully inclusive.
- Adults manage children's behaviour effectively and set out high expectations as to how children should behave when learning independently and with others.
- Actions taken to ensure that children are safe are of a good quality, both inside and outside of the classroom. Children are given the opportunity to try out different activities that require them to understand how to do more challenging tasks but be able to do them safely.
- Teaching in early years is good. Staff provide children with exciting and creative curriculum opportunities to develop and extend their learning, particularly around speech and language. Staff respond to children's interests and are flexible in their approaches. For example, when children discovered 'doors' in the trees outside (knot holes) staff immediately extended talking through discussing what creatures might be living behind the doors, why couldn't they be seen and how might the children encourage them to come out and play. As a result, children were able to describe the creatures and then practise making music to make them want to come and play.
- Adults skilfully intervene while children are learning and help develop their speech and language skills. For example, extending children's language as they were filling different sized containers to include terms around size and capacity.
- Staff, children and parents have highly positive relationships which leaders have worked hard to establish. This helps children to become confident learners quickly and enjoy the various opportunities provided for them. Parents are encouraged to play an active part in their child's education. For example, parents and children were given resources to create a collage of pictures and words to describe what they did over the summer holidays. The collages were subsequently used as discussion topics and on display for children to look and remember previous things that had happened to them. The early years leader maintains a weekly blog for parents to see what their child is learning and the activities they are taking part in.
- Leaders accurately measure what children know and can do and have well-thought-out plans to further increase children's learning. Teachers regularly take part in local authority moderation exercises which have supported their accurate assessments of children's learning. Staff are continually reflecting on and refining their practice to make sure that their children receive the best education possible.
- Parents spoken to and those who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaires are extremely positive about the early years provision and how it has developed over recent years. As one parent stated, 'My child is thriving.'

School details

Unique reference number	122218
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10087545

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

Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Richardson
Headteacher	Katie Newton
Telephone number	01661 833122
Website	www.prudhoeschools.co.uk
Email address	admin@prudhoecastle.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January–1 February 2017

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized first school.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is below the national average.
- Fewer pupils than average speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed teaching and learning in 11 lessons, including phonic groupings and provision in early years. Some of these lessons were visited jointly with the headteacher.
- The lead inspector looked at samples of pupils' work covering a range of subjects, abilities, year groups and gender groups, including early years. Some of this was done jointly with the headteacher.
- The lead inspector met with a group of pupils and spoke informally with pupils during lessons, lunchtime and breaktimes. Pupils in Year 2 were also heard reading aloud.
- The behaviour of pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and as pupils moved around the school was observed.
- The lead inspector held a range of meetings, including with the headteacher, all staff, leaders responsible for safeguarding, the leader responsible for early years, and the leader of the provision for pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector met with six representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors and vice-chair. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- The lead inspector spoke to parents informally at the beginning of the school day. They also took into account the 25 responses from the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, including 25 through the free-text service.
- The lead inspector considered the nine responses from the staff online survey and 39 from the pupil online survey.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents relating to the school's provision including: the self-evaluation and improvement plan; the minutes of meetings of the governing body; safeguarding procedures; information about the progress and attainment of all pupils; plans related to additional government funding; and information on the school's website. The lead inspector also checked the school's single central record.

Inspection team

Anne Vernon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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