

Eppleton Academy Primary School

Church Road, Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton le Spring, Tyne and Wear DH5 9AJ

Inspection dates

6–7 July 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that teaching is securing consistently strong progress from all pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged. Too few pupils reach the highest levels of attainment.
- In the early years, teachers' expectations of what children can achieve are too low. Children spend too much time on activities which lack purpose. Their progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, and for boys, is inadequate.
- Until very recently, governors have not had an accurate view of the school's performance. They have, previously, relied too much on information provided by school leaders. This has limited their ability to check on the impact of leaders' work to improve the school.
- Middle and senior leaders, including in the early years, have not had sufficient opportunities to develop or apply their leadership skills to improve teaching or outcomes for pupils.
- Until recently, teachers' assessments of pupils' performance were inaccurate. While this has improved across key stages 1 and 2, teachers' assessments of what children can do by the time they leave the early years remain too generous.
- More recently, teachers have begun to make better use of assessment information so that teaching is well matched to pupils' needs. However, at times, including in the early years and in writing and mathematics, work is not set at the right level for the most able pupils and those with low prior attainment.
- Teaching does not enable pupils to develop their comprehension skills consistently well. Standards in reading are below average.
- As a result of previous weaknesses in teaching, too many pupils have gaps in their basic skills, including in letter and number formation and spelling. This hampers their progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are courteous, respectful and tolerant. They take immense pride in their school and relish opportunities to lead their peers.
- The teaching of phonics has improved. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 is in line with the national average.
- The school is a safe place for pupils. Arrangements to safeguard pupils and to promote their welfare are effective.
- The new headteacher has secured notable improvements to the school. She has a clear view of what is working well in the school and what must improve.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it secures consistently strong progress from pupils, particularly the most able, those who are disadvantaged and those who have low prior attainment, by:
 - making sure that assessment information is used to set work that challenges pupils at just the right level
 - providing more frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their ability to explain and record their mathematical reasoning
 - giving pupils increased chances to write at length and to practise writing for different audiences and purposes
 - tackling weaknesses in pupils' basic skills of letter and number formation and spelling
 - developing pupils' comprehension skills so that a higher proportion reach and exceed the expected standards in reading for their age.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including in the early years, by ensuring that:
 - middle and senior leaders are given frequent opportunities to check on and improve the quality of teaching
 - middle and senior leaders have a clear understanding of the outcomes achieved by pupils and use this information to set ambitious and measurable targets for improvement in the areas they lead
 - governors develop the skills they need to hold leaders to account for the performance of the school, including checking on the impact of external funding
 - targets set to improve the performance of teachers are precisely focused on the outcomes achieved by their pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able.
- Improve provision in the early years so that more children, including boys, have the skills they need in readiness for Year 1, making sure that:
 - teachers' assessments are an accurate reflection of what children can do independently
 - adults have higher expectations of what children can achieve, particularly in writing and mathematics
 - teachers plan activities which address gaps in children's knowledge, understanding and skills urgently and systematically
 - opportunities for children to work independently, without an adult's support, including outdoors, are suitably challenging and purposeful.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this

aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the use of the 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

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not ensured that teaching is consistently effective in securing strong progress from pupils. Outcomes have fluctuated over time.
- Until recently, as they have tried to get to grips with the new national curriculum and a different approach to assessment, leaders have not ensured that teachers' assessments of what pupils can do are accurate. Teachers have not had a good enough understanding of how to balance the starting points of their pupils with the expectations of the new curriculum. As a result, some teachers have not recognised where pupils were not achieving as well as they should.
- The new headteacher, since her arrival in January 2017, has taken appropriate steps to improve the accuracy of assessment. Most teachers are now making better use of this information in their planning and, consequently, pupils' progress is improving. However, this is not consistently the case across the school. In the early years and occasionally elsewhere in the school, teachers' assessments are inaccurate.
- Teachers receive feedback on their performance and are set targets to improve their effectiveness. However, targets have not focused sufficiently on the improvement of outcomes for pupils, including key groups of pupils. Through a review process, the new headteacher is addressing this systematically so that every teacher is clear about what is expected of their performance.
- Over time, some leaders have not had the opportunity to check on the quality of teaching, assessment and pupils' learning and progress in their areas of responsibility. This includes those leading subjects, the early years and the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, those leaders have not been able to fulfil their roles effectively. The new headteacher has restructured the leadership team quickly and is empowering leaders with access to more information about the performance of the school. Plans are in place so that leaders at all levels have the time and the training they need to take full responsibility for their areas of leadership.
- Leaders are aware that some aspects of the academic curriculum require improvement so that pupils' achievement is consistently strong. Leaders have plans in place to make changes to the curriculum for reading, writing and mathematics, as well as strengthening the links between the core and foundation subjects. Pupils have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including a healthy-eating group, drama group and gardening club, as well as an annual residential experience. Provision for sport is strong. Pupils have opportunities to work with sports coaches regularly and to participate in sporting tournaments, provided through the effective use of the primary physical education and sport premium funding.
- Leaders use the extra funding they receive for disadvantaged pupils, and for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to provide additional support for these pupils. However, there is very little understanding of the impact of the specific activities which are put in place. Governors have not kept a careful enough check on this spending to ensure that it has maximum benefit for these pupils.

- The curriculum to develop pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural skills is highly effective. Pupils have a strong moral code and delight in the rewards for good behaviour, including tea with the headteacher. Most are keen to take on responsibilities within their school community. For example, Year 6 pupils run a healthy tuck shop and are proud of their contribution to help younger pupils to understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. A comprehensive programme of assemblies and class-based activities has ensured that pupils are tolerant and respectful towards those from different backgrounds. Incidents of racist or homophobic language are extremely rare.
- An external school improvement partner has provided the governing body, recently, with an accurate assessment of the school's performance. As a result of his work, governors have much greater clarity about the aspects of the school that need to be improved.
- The newly appointed headteacher has worked quickly to evaluate the school's effectiveness. She knows what is successful and what needs to improve. In a short space of time, she has raised teachers' expectations of what must be achieved with pupils. She has taken rapid action to reorganise staffing to address areas of weakness and, as a result, can demonstrate significant improvements in the outcomes achieved by pupils in key stage 1. This effective work demonstrates her capacity to lead the school to further success.

Governance of the school

- While governors have regularly received information on the performance of the school, they do not have the skills they need to analyse this, or to use it to form their own opinions of the school's effectiveness. Governors have recognised this and have taken recent steps to audit their skills and explore the recruitment of new members. They have arranged further training and external support from a school improvement partner to improve their effectiveness.
- Although governors are aware of some of the school's most important priorities, they have not ensured that leaders set clear and ambitious targets to improve outcomes for pupils. For example, governors have not ensured that a robust plan is in place for the use of external funding for disadvantaged pupils. This has limited their ability to hold leaders to account for the impact of their work. As a result, some aspects of the school's performance have not improved quickly or consistently enough.
- Governors are keen volunteers who are passionate about their role within the school. They devote time regularly to visit the school. They have a good understanding of the ethos of the school and the impact of the school's work in relation to pupils' personal, social and emotional development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All adults, including governors, have a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to the protection of children. Meticulous records reflect leaders' tenacity in following up any issues, including their concerns where other agencies have not acted as promptly as they would expect.

- The school site is secure and appropriate checks are made on the suitability of adults to work with children. Pupils are encouraged to play their part in identifying risks to their safety and do so with assurance. They recognised, for example, the 'hotspots' where bullying might be more likely to occur on the premises and worked proactively to address this. They have complete faith in the adults that look after them and parents are confident that their children are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not set work or plan activities which challenge pupils at the right level for their ability. The most able pupils are sometimes expected to complete tasks which they have already mastered, or are given challenges which do not deepen their learning. In some classes, teachers provide too much support and guidance to the most able pupils so that they do not have to think for themselves. Some lower-attaining pupils are not given enough time to master aspects of their learning. As a result of this, some pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Until recently, teachers have not been assessing with accuracy what pupils can do, nor linking that to what they know of pupils' starting points. This has limited teachers' ability to identify which pupils needed to make more rapid progress. Recent professional development is beginning to improve teachers' ability, across key stages 1 and 2, to make good use of assessment information so that they have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics has improved and is leading to better progress from pupils. Teachers have a better understanding of the demands of the new curriculum and are providing more frequent opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve problems. However, pupils lack the skills they need to explore and explain their mathematical reasoning. This limits the ability of the most able pupils to work at greater depth.
- The teaching of phonics has improved so that pupils have more confidence in using their phonics knowledge to decode texts. Nonetheless, there is variability in the effectiveness of the teaching of comprehension skills. Pupils are not challenged well enough to infer meaning and make deductions from what they read, or to use evidence from the text to support their conclusions.
- Teachers are developing pupils' ability to recognise and make use of different grammatical features and punctuation successfully in their writing. However, leaders have identified correctly that some pupils have a deficit in their phonics knowledge, due to previously weak teaching. These pupils struggle with spelling because of this. In addition, the current curriculum for writing does not allow pupils to write with freedom and originality for different reasons. This limits the progress of the most able pupils.
- Teachers across key stages 1 and 2 work tirelessly in lessons to check on pupils' understanding and to quickly uncover misconceptions. They are effective in refocusing their explanations to clarify key learning points. They provide immediate feedback to enable pupils to recognise where they may have gone wrong in their work.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils take a lead in promoting tolerance and preventing bullying. The school's well-established pupil anti-bullying team, supported by parent ambassadors, play a key role in resolving any conflicts and sharing messages about the school's code of conduct. Pupils have great confidence in the work of this team to ensure that incidents of bullying are rare and, when they happen, are tackled quickly.
- Pupils are very aware of the importance of the democratic process, largely due to the work of the school council. Pupils are proud to serve as councillors and their peers are keen to recognise their successes. For example, pupils were eager to point out new play equipment for breaktimes and the recent changes to the school meals, as a result of the council's valued work.
- Pupils' safety is given high priority. Pupils can articulate the risks when they are playing or working online and know how to avoid putting themselves in danger. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety and they do this readily. Pupils were confident to highlight to inspectors the risks associated with water, fire and different forms of transport.
- Most pupils conduct themselves well, both inside the school buildings and during less formal playtime. However, a very small minority of pupils do not demonstrate an awareness of others when playing more boisterous games at breaktime. Occasionally, when adults are not supervising, these pupils lack the self-discipline to prevent accidental incidents escalating into conflicts.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In all key stages, pupils are polite and courteous and full of enthusiasm for their school. They have good manners and show respect to the adults who care for them. During lessons, pupils apply themselves well, take care with their work and contribute with gusto to discussions.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. The overall school attendance is above the national average because the importance of attendance is communicated well to pupils. Leaders have not been tracking the attendance of groups of pupils effectively. As yet, they have not ensured that the attendance of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is as high as it should be.
- While most pupils behave well at playtime and lunchtime, pupils themselves report that, occasionally, a very small minority of pupils fall out over arguments related to football games. Pupils are confident that when this occurs, staff address the issues quickly and thoroughly.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that teaching is enabling all pupils to make strong progress. While many pupils make at least typical progress, the extent to which pupils make the rapid progress needed to catch up from lower starting points or to reach the highest levels of attainment is variable across the school.
- Over time, the standards reached by pupils by the time they leave key stage 1 have fluctuated. Pupils' current workbooks demonstrate progress and attainment is improving, particularly in mathematics. However, in reading and writing, not enough pupils are making the strong progress needed from their starting points in order to catch up to the expected standard by the end of Year 2.
- The standards reached by pupils by the time they leave the school have varied over time. For example, in 2016, the standards achieved by pupils in Year 6 in mathematics rose sharply and were well above the national averages. However, the current learning and progress of pupils in key stage 2 demonstrate that a significant minority do not make strong enough progress from their starting points. Consequently, the proportions of pupils in Year 6 currently working at the expected standards in reading and mathematics are below the national averages seen in 2016.
- The outcomes achieved by disadvantaged pupils have been inconsistent over time. Pupils' workbooks and current assessments show that increasing numbers of disadvantaged pupils in key stage 1 are making better progress and meeting the expected standards for their age in reading (including phonics), writing and mathematics. However, across key stage 2, pupil premium funding is not being used well enough to support disadvantaged pupils to catch up quickly to age-related expectations. Too few are reaching the highest levels of attainment by the time they leave the school.
- The progress and attainment of the most able pupils vary across the school. Teachers are becoming increasingly aware of the priority to challenge this group of pupils. Consequently, the attainment of the most able is beginning to rise in some year groups. However, leaders know that there is much more to do to ensure that the proportion of pupils achieving the highest levels by the time they leave Year 6 is in line with the national average.
- After a dip in 2016, the standards achieved by pupils in the Year 1 phonics screening check have risen this year. A broadly average proportion of pupils in Year 1 currently meet the expected standard for their age. However, across key stage 2, some pupils have a deficit in their phonics knowledge as a result of previous low achievement.
- As a result of clear targets for pupils, including those set in education, health and care plans, teaching has enabled pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress from their individual starting points.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- Historically, the proportion of children reaching the expected level of development by the end of the Reception Year increased over time to just below the national average in 2016. However, the standards achieved by children currently in the Reception Year are well below those typically expected for their age. In a number of areas of learning, particularly in writing and mathematics, many children, especially boys, do not have the skills they need in preparation for Year 1.
- Teachers' current assessments in the Reception class are inflated. They do not reflect an accurate picture of what children can do independently.
- Teaching is not building on children's skills and capabilities with sufficient urgency or precision. Records of children's learning indicate that adults do identify gaps in children's knowledge and skills correctly. However, tasks are not then planned to address the important next steps. This is particularly the case with mathematics, where activities do not build on children's prior attainment. As a result, their progress across the Reception year is inadequate.
- Teaching is not ensuring that children learn to form their numbers and letters accurately. Mistakes are repeated, time and time again, embedding misconceptions for children.
- For much of their time, children in the Reception Year flit between activities which lack purpose and challenge. Boys, in particular, are permitted to spend considerable time on a climbing frame area, or running around the play area without any adult intervention to redirect their attention. This inadequate provision has led to boys' weak attainment and progress.
- The early years leader does not have a clear picture of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the early years unit. She has not been given sufficient time to check on the quality of provision, nor collect the information she needs to review the progress of different groups of children. Consequently, she is unable to articulate the reasons for children's low achievement. This limits her ability to plan for improvement.
- Recent improvements to the quality of phonics teaching have ensured that children have a better understanding of letters and the sounds they make. However, most children have not developed the skills they need to apply their phonics knowledge independently in their writing. For example, the majority are unable to write phonetically plausible simple sentences by the end of the Reception Year without support.
- Relationships between adults and children are positive. Adults set clear expectations for children's behaviour and most children behave well and follow instructions eagerly. At times, when activities fail to ignite their interest, some children do not sustain concentration and their behaviour requires improvement.
- The progress made by children during their time in the Nursery is better than that seen during the Reception Year. Those activities for children in the Nursery which are led by adults are planned more accurately to meet the needs of children. Children are supported well to listen attentively to stories, to join in with key phrases, to take turns and to share their ideas. During the inspection, a small group of boys were extremely excited at the prospect of going on their own 'bear hunt' because of the enthusiasm

the teacher engendered when she read the story. This teaching is enabling more children to develop the learning skills they need during their time in the Nursery, so that they are better prepared for their Reception Year. However, when children are not working directly with adults, activities that they can choose lack sufficient challenge, particularly for those children who have skills which are typical for their age.

- Most parents are highly appreciative of the staff in the early years and the care they give to the children. Leaders have ensured that all aspects of the early years welfare requirements are met.
- Staff have developed productive relationships with parents, partly through the range of opportunities offered to get parents involved in their children's learning. The 'reading for fun' club is evaluated positively by families, who value the guidance they have had so they can best support their children with reading at home.

School details

Unique reference number	138213
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10032043

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pastor Ian Wren
Headteacher	Mrs Kim Bushby
Telephone number	01915 536738
Website	www.eppletonacademyprimary.co.uk/
Email address	office@eppletonacademyprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 June 2013

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who require support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the school's curriculum, accessibility plan, key stage 2 results or the spending of pupil premium funding on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the school's curriculum, accessibility plan, key stage 2

results or the spending of pupil premium funding.

- Since the previous inspection, the school has extended its early years provision to include children in the Nursery on a part-time basis.
- A new headteacher joined the school in January 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons. The headteacher observed lessons jointly with the lead inspector.
- Inspectors listened to a range of pupils read and reviewed the work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors talked informally to pupils in lessons and around the school and held a formal meeting with pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. In addition, the lead inspector met with the school's improvement partner.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' evaluation of the school's performance, school development planning and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors also reviewed the school's policies, minutes of meetings of the governing body and documentation linked to safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors reviewed the 26 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the five responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents during the inspection through discussions with parents at the start of the school day and the 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Claire Brown, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Debbie Redshaw	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter Marsh	Ofsted Inspector

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