

Inspection of a good school: Newcastle CofE Primary School

Newcastle, Craven Arms, Shropshire SY7 8QL

Inspection date: 4 May 2023

Outcome

Newcastle CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a family feel to Newcastle CofE Primary. Because of its size, everyone knows and cares for one another. Older pupils look after younger pupils and are positive role models to them. For example, they play an active role in assemblies to encourage all to take part. At social times, pupils from all year groups play happily together. They respect any differences between them. One pupil captured the feelings of others, describing the school as 'special' because of how well everyone gets on with each other.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and time in school. They rise to the high expectations their teachers have of them. They like the opportunities to learn in different ways. This includes learning in the outdoor classroom and forest school. Pupils go on memorable trips to enhance their learning, such as to museums and a historic prison.

As part of a federation of schools, pupils benefit from opportunities to socialise and learn alongside other children of their own age. This includes going on trips together, participating in sporting competitions and in a choir. Recently, pupils enjoyed welcoming friends from the other schools to their picnic to celebrate the King's Coronation. They also learned about possible careers through the joint forensic science investigation day.

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

Leaders have designed a well-thought-out curriculum. They have made sure that it covers the national curriculum and have adapted the sequence of learning to take account of the mix of year groups in each class. The curriculum includes topics that support pupils' future aspirations and learning about their community. For instance, key stage 2 pupils learn about the local area, farming methods and food production as part of the 'Our land, our lives and future livelihoods' unit of work. Pupils achieve high-quality outcomes that reflect their success as learners.

Teachers carefully organise learning in lessons to ensure that each pupil makes progress over time within the shared topic being covered. Learning activities are chosen to

encourage pupils to discuss their learning. Pupils work well independently and support each other if they get stuck. Children in the early years benefit from the presence of older pupils, who help them to develop important personal and social skills. As such, pupils are confident and articulate when talking to each other and adults.

Leaders have made sure that pupils focus on learning to read every day. Younger pupils follow a phonics programme and older pupils develop their reading skills through guided reading in their literacy lessons. All staff are trained in phonics and support pupils well when they are in the early stages of learning to read. However, sometimes the books pupils are reading are not matched carefully enough to their reading ability, especially as they progress from phonics to becoming more independent readers.

Staff identify any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) pupils may have. Leaders produce clear plans with specific targets for these pupils and offer personalised intervention strategies. Teachers make sure learning is adapted to help pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers. Because of this personalised support, pupils with SEND make good progress in both their academic and wider development.

The Christian values underpin the school's culture. Pupils demonstrate these values in their conduct and positive attitudes. However, although the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is comprehensive, pupils have not acquired a deep enough understanding of the diversity of modern British society. Some pupils expressed worry around aspects of society they are not familiar with, such as cities. Leaders aim to give pupils a broad range of experiences through trips and enrichment opportunities, but these are not always matched to the gaps pupils have in their personal development.

Leaders and governors know the school and community well. However, recent times have been turbulent for the school. Leaders have worked hard to ensure that any impact of this on pupils' learning is minimised. Parents and carers acknowledge this too. Staff are positive about the impact of belonging to the federation on their workload and professional development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff know every pupil and their particular needs well. This helps them to quickly identify any small concerns around a pupil's well-being or safety. Staff pass on any concerns quickly and leaders take swift action when it is needed. Staff benefit from regular training on how to keep pupils safe.

Pupils learn about how to stay safe through the well-designed PSHE programme. Leaders have ensured that pupils also learn about risks that are more specific to their community and location, such as river safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not have reading books that are well matched to their current reading ability. This means they encounter some words they are not yet ready for and struggle to read as fluently as they should. Leaders should ensure that all pupils have access to and read a range of books that are appropriately matched to their reading ability to enable them to become fluent and confident readers.
- The design of the curriculum does not help pupils acquire a secure and deep enough understanding of the diversity of modern Britain. This means that pupils are unclear and sometimes anxious about life and experiences that are different to those familiar to them. Leaders should ensure that pupils' learning in PSHE and the enrichment opportunities on offer carefully address any gaps, so pupils are fully prepared for life in modern British society.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2014.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	123488
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10257013
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Di Cosgrove
Headteacher	Anna Cook
Website	www.newcastleprimaryschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has joined the Blue Hills Federation, which comprises three schools.
- The school is led by the federation executive headteacher and is supported by a lead teacher.
- The lead teacher was absent from school at the time of inspection. Another federation lead teacher is currently working with the school.
- Governors have paused a consultation on 'prescribed alteration' to the school, which would involve pupils being educated at other schools within the federation.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school's last section 48 diocesan inspection was in March 2016. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher and interim lead teacher. They met with governors and the local authority adviser. They also spoke to a representative from the Diocese of Hereford.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors checked safeguarding procedures, including the recruitment checks made on staff. They met with the designated safeguarding lead, staff and pupils to discuss wider aspects of safeguarding. They scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including comments submitted via the free-text facility.

Inspection team

Nicola Beech, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Keri Baylis

His Majesty's Inspector

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