

# Inspection of a good school: Branton Community Primary School

Branton, Powburn, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 4JF

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Inspection date: 29 March 2023

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

In the early years, children get off to a flying start, however this is not sustained in the older year groups. Some pupils' needs are not sufficiently met at times and their learning varies. Sometimes staff expect too much from pupils without giving them time to secure their understanding before moving on to something new. At other times, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. When this occurs, they are not sufficiently challenged in their learning.

Leaders are warm and caring. Pupils feel safe in this small rural school. There is no bullying, and everyone knows each other well. Children in the early years follow the well-established routines. They are visibly happy and take delight in discovering new things. However, there are some low-level distractions in the older class.

Leaders have carefully considered how to give breadth to pupils' educational experience. Visitors to school help pupils to think about world religions and what it means to be a person of faith. Specialist teachers and coaches deliver music and physical education sessions. Pupils learn to play a musical instrument and are part of the school ceilidh band.

Pupils look forward to their outdoor learning, led by highly trained members of staff. They enjoy the forest-school activities, some of which link with topics studied in class.

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

Teachers deliver some of the subject curriculum in a cross-curricular way. For example, pupils are building a replica of Hadrian's Wall as a forest-school activity. Some of the teaching has not considered carefully enough exactly what leaders wish pupils to know and when. This means that some parts of the curriculum are disjointed. The amount of time allocated to some subjects, such as religious education, means that the curriculum

cannot be delivered in its entirety. Pupils do not always build on their previous learning. Some pupils find it difficult to remember and talk about topics they have studied in the past.

Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. Some pupils miss out on aspects of the key stage 1 national curriculum as activities reflect the key stage 2 curriculum. As a result, the individual needs of some pupils are not always met. For example, some pupils lack opportunities to learn all the basics of writing. This means that they do not have a firm understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Leaders prioritise the teaching of reading. The books that pupils read match the sounds that they know. Pupils who fall behind receive support to get them back on track. Pupils learn to read with confidence. They enjoy their daily story-time sessions. Pupils change their reading-for-pleasure books in the visiting library van.

The early years staff model the expected language to be used and how to complete learning activities. Children independently access all areas of the provision. They show positive attitudes towards their learning. Children listen to staff, share resources well and take turns in conversation. They particularly like joining in with the reading of a favourite book, saying the repeating phrases.

Older pupils talk over each other and adults. They do not listen well to one another. Some pupils disrupt the learning of others while the teacher is teaching. Some pupils are highly articulate and express their opinions very confidently. However, staff do not ensure that all pupils are actively engaged during lessons. Expectations are not shared with pupils about how much work should be completed in a lesson. As a result, some pupils do not complete the tasks set for them.

Attendance is improving as leaders are working with families to help them overcome any barriers to attending school.

Pupils enjoy visiting the local farm, especially during lambing season. Leaders arrange cultural visits to the Hancock Museum and Tyne Theatre in Newcastle. Links with the local community have led to the 'Crafty Cookies' enrichment activity being held in nearby Powburn.

The governing body, although involved in the life of the school, has an overly optimistic view of the school's achievements. They are not rigorous enough in assuring that the provision in mixed-age classes is meeting the needs of all pupils or that sufficient time is set aside on the timetable to fully deliver all the curriculum subjects.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. They learn about water safety and how to swim. Pupils are taught strategies to deal with

risks they may encounter when using the internet. In forest school, pupils learn the correct use of tools and how to react to specific risks such as fire.

Staff and governors receive regular training and safeguarding updates. This helps them to understand and fulfil their safeguarding roles. Leaders follow up safeguarding concerns raised by staff swiftly. They seek appropriate advice and support for pupils and their families.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The curriculum in some subjects is not well matched to the needs of all pupils from their different starting points. As a result, expectations of what some pupils can achieve are either too high or too low. Leaders should define the most important knowledge to be taught to each group and ensure that staff use the most effective teaching strategies and resources to support pupils' learning successfully.
- The writing curriculum does not ensure that pupils have a strong enough grasp of the basics of writing. This means that some pupils do not have a firm foundation for writing for their phase of education. Leaders should review the curriculum to ensure that pupils are specifically taught the appropriate components of writing for their age. Leaders should also arrange further training for teachers on the teaching of writing.
- There is a lack of consistency from staff when implementing the behaviour policy and in expectations of pupils' behaviour. This leads to some pupils' low-level disruptive behaviour going unchallenged. Some pupils are not actively engaged in their learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff are consistent in their expectations of behaviour for learning and application of the behaviour policy.

## **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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2017.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122188
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10241963
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	17
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Fiona Strachan and Sarah Parsons
<b>Headteacher</b>	Zoe Ryan
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.branton.northumberland.sch.uk">www.branton.northumberland.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This is a small school with two classes. The headteacher has a substantial teaching commitment.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, subject leaders, class teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector met also with a representative from the local authority and members of the local governing board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into English, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors looked at curriculum planning, conducted lesson visits with leaders, spoke to pupils about their work, and looked at books and samples of work.

- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector reviewed documents on the school’s website, as well as published information about the school’s performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- Inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour in classrooms, around the school and at playtime and lunchtime. They spoke with pupils about their views of the school and their learning, behaviour and safety.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to staff, parents and governors. A range of safeguarding information was scrutinised, including the school’s policies and records. Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed relationships between pupils and adults. The lead inspector also met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the school gate and considered responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Staff’s views were taken into account through a number of meetings.

### **Inspection team**

Mary Cook, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Jane Wilson

Ofsted Inspector

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