

Branton Community First School

Branton, Powburn, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 4JF

Inspection dates 14 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The senior leaders and the governing body have a clear vision for the future of the school. This can be seen in the significant development of this good school as a valued rural community resource.
- The well-managed teaching is good with some imaginative elements observed. Children's skills when they enter the Nursery class are typical for their age. All groups of pupils make good progress as they move through the school.
- All pupils are cared for and looked after exceptionally well. All parents agree. Pupils have a well-developed sense of how to keep themselves safe.
- The good curriculum and interesting range of activities and visits are well matched to the needs of each pupil.
- Excellent relationships, coupled with high expectations, help pupils to learn well. All pupils thrive in the happy friendly atmosphere, including those pupils eligible for extra government funding, those with complex needs and those learning English.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and this is reflected in their high levels of commitment in lessons. Pupils are responsible, considerate and kind to each other.
- The headteacher's energy and passion have enabled the school to improve a great deal since the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always use pupils' progress information relentlessly to plan activities exactly matched to pupils' abilities and needs.
- Opportunities are occasionally missed to demand more from pupils and provide additional practise for their numeracy skills.
- Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to question pupils closely enough in order to check and test their knowledge and understanding.
- Rapid progress and higher achievement is not yet a consistent feature of all lessons.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed three lessons and scrutinised pupils' work jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons and walks around the school site to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, parents, members of the governing body, school staff, including senior leaders and the local authority school improvement lead adviser.
- There was insufficient response to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to make a contribution to the inspection.
- The inspector observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation including the school's own records of pupils' current progress, records from the observation of lessons, performance management targets and checks made on pupils' work and the school's plans for improvement. Records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding were also considered.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Branton is a much smaller than average sized primary school.
- Currently, an extremely low proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for pupil premium funding (which is provided by the government to support the learning of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, in the care of the local authority or the children of members of the armed forces). This is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is three times the national average. Reception children often have limited pre-school experience.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. Two pupils are from minority ethnic groups and both are at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- In April 2012, the school successfully appealed against its planned closure. In September 2012, a community nursery managed by the governing body was successfully established. A parent and toddler group, which meets one morning each week, was also set up successfully.
- The school works in close collaboration with local schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all progress is rapid and sustained so that all pupils exceed what is expected for their age and ability, especially in mathematics, by:
 - further enriching the curriculum to promote the highest levels of achievement especially in problem solving
 - increasing the rigour of the school's methods of checking on pupils' progress from their starting points, in order to inform lesson planning even more effectively.
- Increase the proportion of teaching that is stimulating and inspiring by:
 - capitalising on the thought-provoking practice that exists to increase the level of difficulty and challenge in lessons
 - shaping questions more closely to match pupils' abilities and needs
 - extending the range of opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join Nursery class with skills and experience broadly typical for their age, although the because of the small cohorts this does vary considerably. They settle speedily, confidently and happily in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All are keen to learn and develop their listening and speaking well, while enjoying a broad range of well-planned interesting activities. Their keenness to learn is fostered very well.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in the Reception class and in Years 1 to 4. Pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and numeracy are good, although occasionally their progress in applying their numeracy skills to solve problems is uneven. Increasingly, pupils are exceeding what is expected of them, because teaching is much improved since the previous inspection. By the end of Year 2 and Year 4, standards are typically above average, a little higher in English than in mathematics.
- Pupils learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs also make the same good progress, because their needs are well understood by staff. Despite the frequent checks made on pupils' progress and the design of some thoughtfully tailored activities, pupils' needs are not always precisely enough pinpointed when planning their work and lesson activity. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is so low as to make any comparison between their attainment and that of pupils not eligible is statistically unreliable.
- Imaginative and interesting ways are used to link subjects together and so add vitality to lessons. For example, using travel as a theme to encourage pupils to use a variety of their skills in English, mathematics, and geography. Despite such learning experiences, opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce and practise pupils' mathematical skills across all subjects.
- Good and sometimes rapid progress is made in nurturing pupils' enjoyment and love of reading. Standards in reading at the age of six are a little above those expected nationally. Older pupils are well informed about the themes and styles used by a range of authors. For example, pupils' reading of the novel, 'Bill's New Frock' encourages pupils to think and write sensitively about labelling and respect for difference; a crucial part of their personal development. Pupils are confident describing their favourite themes in their current reading. Parents are fully involved in supporting their children's learning, including in their early reading.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good and sometimes thought-provoking teaching enables pupils of all ages and starting points to do well. Staff work effectively to get the best out of every pupil. Typically, there is a high level of mutual respect between all staff and pupils in the school's friendly and happy atmosphere.
- A rich variety of visits and visitors add to the range of interesting activities and first-hand experiences. This, in turn, encourages pupils to discuss and debate issues and to be able to fully explain their thinking. A good example of this was seen when pupils described what it was like to touch some of the exotic reptiles and insects when the Creepy Crawley Roadshow visited school. This richness also helps to underpin the pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' progress is quickest in lessons when:
 - teachers make it clear what pupils are expected to learn
 - lesson activities constantly stretch pupils' thinking and understanding
 - imaginative use of themes ensure that pupils of all ages and abilities can achieve success
 - frequent questioning checks and tests pupils' thinking
 - helpful marking ensures that all pupils know how well they have done and how they can meet their challenging targets.
- The pace of progress is more uneven when:

- approaches are less interesting and more drawn out
 - activities are less closely matched to the age, abilities and needs of all pupils
 - questioning is not consistently searching enough
 - insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to practise their numeracy skills.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are given a good range of opportunities to explore and find things out for themselves. Careful checks made on and the recording of children's development help teachers to plan subsequent activities well.
 - Pupil premium funding contributes well to the richness and variety of lessons. For example, adding to the range of visits, such as to Chinatown in Newcastle. Additional individual support ensures that pupils supported by the funding achieve the same standards as their classmates.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The school provides exceptional care and support for pupils. Excellent staff role models and clear boundaries for their conduct, set by pupils themselves, ensure all are happy and safe. All parents agree.
- In and around school, pupils are happy, friendly and extremely well-mannered. Older pupils are especially thoughtful, kind and helpful towards younger children and require no prompting to be helpful. For example, older pupils were observed making sure that younger children each had a car booster seat for the minibus journey to the swimming pool.
- The warm, friendly welcome by staff each morning sets a very positive tone for the rest of the day. In conversations, pupils report that, 'all pupils are kind to each other and don't bully'. Pupils speak confidently about how they manage their own behaviour, especially at social times. They observe that staff are never too busy to listen to a worry or concern. Parents value the ease with which they can approach staff. The inspector saw nothing less than exemplary behaviour, sensible attitudes and kindness towards each other.
- Pupils are well informed about danger and risk and appreciate the regular advice they receive from the frequent visits of the local community policeman. For example, learning how to keep safe by observing the firework and green cross codes. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the many opportunities they have playing, talking and having fun with their friends. They thrive on the responsibility they are given to have a voice in the day-to-day running of the school.
- Attendance is consistently above average. Individual pupils and families whose circumstances are sometimes complex are extremely well supported by staff. Parents appreciate greatly the way in which their children are cared for so well.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, together with the astutely led governing body, have ensured continuous improvement since the previous inspection. They have high aspirations and a clear view of the school as a valuable rural community resource. Excellent parental and staff commitment add to the school's ambition.
- Robust and efficient systems are in place to check pupils' progress, although opportunities are occasionally missed to use the progress information to personalise tasks that are ever more demanding of pupils. Good use is made of pupil premium funding to ensure that any of the tiny proportion of pupils known to be eligible for such funding achieve well.
- The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. Suitable training programmes are adopted to widen the experience and increase the skills of staff. Performance management targets are sharply focused upon pupils' progress and achievement and incentives and rewards for staff are only given when merited.
- The establishment of a nursery has added to the variety and range of opportunities in the Early Years Foundation Stage for children to enjoy and thrive. For example, all children in Nursery and Reception classes join with older pupils to go swimming. The good and improving curriculum helps pupils to make good progress in all areas, including in reading, writing, mathematics,

science, art and physical education. Yet, now and then, opportunities are overlooked to encourage pupils to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems in other subjects.

- Dedicated and considerate staff show how pupils can take care of one another and get along together. This ensures that all pupils have an equality of opportunity to be fully included in all of the school's life. Any form of discrimination is not accepted. The school is diligent in its efforts to ensure the parents are fully informed about its work. Parents and their children of non-school age are made extremely welcome when they visit school.
- The expertise of local schools and the local authority is used well to make certain that the school's checks on its own work, including the quality of teaching, are accurate.
- Thorough checks are made to ensure that pupils are safe and secure and all safeguarding requirements are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body have been resolute in driving the school's improvement. The governors have been equally resolute in responding strongly against the planned closure and demonstrating their ambitions by providing Nursery provision at the school. The governors attend relevant training and they have a clear grasp of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, because of the checks that they make. The governing body manages resources extremely effectively. It ensures that the headteacher is challenged to make certain that teachers' performance is good and the use of pupil premium funding ensures that good progress is made by those eligible.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122188
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	402087

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Laura Capper
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Lloyd-Harris
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2009
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