

West Newcastle Academy

Off Armstrong Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE4 8QP

Inspection dates

5–6 June 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and the governors are successfully growing the school. They take care to review its effectiveness, adapting policies and practices to ensure its continued improvement.
- Leaders have slowly but surely refined the curriculum. They have maintained its distinctiveness while ensuring that there is sufficiently detailed planning in place to support pupils' academic progress.
- Capacity to sustain the school's development is growing. Good professional development opportunities mean middle leaders are increasingly influential.
- The quality of teaching is good. There is some variability, however, with practice being most effective in key stage 1. Some teaching in key stage 2 is less well tailored to pupils' differing starting points and does not always challenge the most able.
- Over time, outcomes across a range of measures have steadily improved. From below average starting points, pupils are attaining standards in line with those seen nationally at the end of key stage 1.
- Some pupils in key stage 2 have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders know that careful assessment and sharp teaching are necessary to identify and address these gaps before pupils transfer to secondary school.
- The school has a distinctive ethos typified by informal and friendly relationships. All members of staff are known by their first name. Some pupils who have found it difficult to manage in other schools cope well in this school.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. There is considerable extra support provided to help these pupils catch up with their peers.
- The persistent efforts of leaders to improve attendance are paying off. Overall attendance is now close to the national average and persistent absence has reduced considerably.
- The governors have played an important role in the school's development. They remain highly active, provide tight scrutiny and hold leaders fully to account.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should improve the quality of teaching further, to ensure that pupils make strong progress and achieve their potential at the end of key stage 2, by:
 - ensuring that teachers in key stage 2 tailor lessons to reflect the differing starting points of pupils in their class, including making sure the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently
 - ensuring that pupils regularly review, edit and improve their work
 - carefully assessing older pupils' grasp of the core subjects to identify and address gaps in their knowledge
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length
 - consistently applying the school's expectations for behaviour and presentation of work.
- Improve outcomes further in the early years to at least match those seen nationally, by:
 - accelerating the progress children make in learning phonics so that the most able children begin writing sentences earlier in the year
 - ensuring that all adults who work in the early years are skilled at reinforcing and extending children's knowledge and skills as they play.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and governors are guiding the school's expansion into a full primary school effectively. They have carefully managed to sustain its distinctiveness, while adapting aspects of provision to ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently academic to support pupils' learning and development. They are refining as they go, slowly but surely improving policy and practice.
- Outcomes in the school are steadily improving. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was broadly in line with that seen nationally last year. Leaders and governors are acutely aware of the need to demonstrate their older pupils can achieve well when the school takes national curriculum tests at the end of key stage 2 for the first time in 2020.
- The headteacher has ensured that the school is fully integrated into the local education landscape. She attends all the local authority headteacher meetings and works in collaboration with other local headteachers to evaluate one another's schools. The staff regularly join other schools to moderate pupils' work. These actions are ensuring that the school is learning from practice elsewhere and using this knowledge to shape its own provision.
- The headteacher is successfully building leadership capacity as the school grows in size. Subject leaders have access to appropriate middle leadership training. Both the mathematics and English subject leaders are completing professional leadership qualifications this year. They are increasingly involved in refining the curriculum and monitoring the quality of learning taking place.
- The rich and distinctive curriculum has continued to evolve. Outdoor learning in settings such as the beach and woodland continues to feature strongly, especially in the early years and key stage 1. While the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is woven into these experiences, an increasing amount of time in key stage 2 is given to teaching in distinct lessons. In key stage 2, around half of teaching centres on the core subjects. Leaders are monitoring the balance of the curriculum carefully to ensure that it is meeting the needs of pupils as they progress towards national curriculum tests at the end of Year 6.
- Leaders are using additional funding effectively. There is a broad range of extra help provided for disadvantaged pupils through the pupil premium. The family link worker is successfully supporting disadvantaged pupils with lower attendance. There is free access to breakfast club and after-school clubs for disadvantaged pupils. During the day, disadvantaged pupils are helped with extra English and mathematics sessions, especially if they also speak English as an additional language. Disadvantaged pupils also stay on after school for 'prep', a daily session to help them with homework.
- The primary sports premium is being used effectively to provide a wide range of sporting opportunities and to sustain the programme of outdoor learning. This has a positive effect on pupils' health and well-being.
- Leaders act quickly to identify and assess pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), involving external professionals as necessary. Planning for the

individual needs of these pupils is thorough. Leaders carefully track the progress and attainment of this group of pupils.

- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. The school delivers a broad programme of learning that develops pupils' awareness of different faiths and cultures. Pupils have a good grasp of topical issues and are respectful and tolerant of one another. Parents, carers and pupils appreciate the 'family feel' the school engenders.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is overseen by a board of trustees, several of which also act as governors.
- Collectively, the governors and trustees display strong commitment and clarity of vision. They are determined to improve the education outcomes for children in the community, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Their admissions policy includes criteria to prioritise the admission of disadvantaged pupils.
- Several governors, including the chair of the governing body, have played an active role in the school since its inception. They have thoughtfully and realistically refined and developed the school's policies while maintaining aspects of the original vision.
- Governors receive good information from the headteacher. This information has been simplified since the last inspection so that it is easier for governors to understand the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher is an experienced designated safeguarding leader. She has ensured that other staff are trained to the same level to meet the needs of a growing school. All members of staff have received up-to-date training in safeguarding and are confident in the actions to take if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare or safety.
- Thorough checks are made on all adults who work in or visit the school.
- Leaders keep detailed records of the actions they take to protect pupils. A careful chronology is maintained, covering all partnership working with other agencies.
- Leaders ensure that risk assessments are in place governing the use of the nature park and when pupils are taken off site. The caretaker, for example, diligently checks the perimeter of the nature park on a regular basis.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Over time, the school has refined and developed its approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders have maintained high expectations and challenged teaching that was not effective enough. Outcomes from the staff survey show most members of staff currently in the school are strongly committed to the school's vision and direction.

- Most lessons in key stage 1 are well planned, purposeful and engaging. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is carefully sequenced to build understanding. Leaders have reflected each year on how well pupils achieve and have introduced well-designed sessions to strengthen pupils' grasp of the technical aspects of reading and writing. As a result, pupils learn to write with increasing fluency and standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are good.
- The quality of teaching in key stage 2 is more variable. Some teaching is not sufficiently tailored to meet the different abilities of pupils. Consequently, some of the most able pupils are not being consistently challenged.
- When pupils have opportunities to write at length, many display the ability to draw upon literary devices to convey ideas and meaning. For example, in a topic about sea pollution, a Year 3 pupil wrote, 'Their boat was followed by a dirty old plastic bottle that danced on the waves like a ballerina.' Scrutiny of workbooks from across the year shows pupils are hindered by the infrequent opportunities for them to write at length.
- The mathematics subject leader has strengthened the teaching of mathematics across the school. The mathematics curriculum now shows a good balance. There is plenty of time given to practising calculation skills and enough time given to applying these skills to solving problems. This is ensuring that younger pupils are acquiring secure mathematical knowledge and skills. However, some older pupils experienced a less rigorous mathematics curriculum in the past and consequently have gaps in their knowledge.
- Evidence from workbooks shows, on occasions, pupils review, edit and improve their work. However, this does not happen consistently. This allows some misconceptions or errors to go uncorrected.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Most pupils develop as confident and curious learners who conduct themselves well across the day.
- The school has a range of programmes in place to support those pupils with social and emotional barriers to learning. There are trained teaching assistants who skilfully support more vulnerable pupils to manage their feelings. Most pupils can self-regulate their behaviour as a result. A few pupils occasionally become upset. Staff are skilled in calming them down and de-escalating any worries they have.
- Pupils' health and fitness are actively promoted. There are frequent opportunities to learn outdoors. There is a good range of play equipment on the school site and a variety of sports activities available after school, including street dance, ballet, football and rugby clubs. Pupils also receive swimming lessons. The school also has a well-stocked vegetable garden which is actively maintained by pupils. Several parents said one reason for choosing the school was the amount of outdoor learning that takes place and how well this supports their children's development.

- The school caters for pupils during the school holidays. There are four weeks of activities during the summer, two weeks at Easter and a week during the Christmas break. This offer is free to disadvantaged pupils.
- The personal, social, health and economic curriculum helps pupils to develop a good understanding of how to stay safe. Topics such as online safety are covered.
- Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures, which helps them to integrate well with one another. During the inspection, Year 3 pupils were learning about Eid by interviewing the Muslim children in their class.
- In their responses to Parent View, several parents indicated they value the school because it offers a more informal approach that suits their children. Pupils call members of staff by their first name. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and nurturing. Pupils say they are confident to go to any adult if they have any concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils apply themselves well and conduct themselves appropriately. Just occasionally, when teachers do not make their expectations clear enough, some pupils become loud and interrupt the flow of lessons.
- The school has not, to date, excluded any pupil for poor behaviour.
- The school's ethos and approach to teaching have developed curious pupils who are confident to contribute in lessons and often ask questions.
- The persistent efforts of senior leaders and the school's family link worker are steadily improving the overall level of attendance. This year to date overall attendance is over 95% and close to last year's national average for similar schools. The family link worker works closely with more vulnerable families to improve their children's attendance. This has helped to reduce the level of persistent absence to below that seen nationally last year. The school has successfully improved the attendance of children from its Eastern European families through well-targeted support. The school uses its minibuses to help some pupils get to school, including some who have relocated to different parts of the city.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In recent years, pupils have, on average, started key stage 1 some way behind other pupils nationally. Some have begun Year 1 with weaker skills in reading, writing and number than should be expected for their age. Effective teaching in key stage 1 has helped pupils to make good progress and quickly improve their basic skills. Teachers have become increasingly adept at teaching phonics. Pupils who are behind receive effective extra help. As a result, most pupils can decode new and unfamiliar words and they grow in confidence as readers. The proportion of pupils who attain the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved year on year to match that seen nationally. Pupils who did not achieve the standard last year have progressed well this year. They are provided with suitable books for their stage of development and show keenness and determination to complete their books.

- Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 confirm most pupils make good progress. In 2018, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were just below those seen nationally. Provisional assessments for this year indicate outcomes at the end of key stage 1 have improved further. Pupils who speak English as an additional language settle well and quickly acquire a good grasp of English. Key vocabulary is taught carefully, and essential words are readily available on each classroom table. Additional support for these pupils helps them to catch up quickly with their peers.
- Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making similar progress to their peers. However, as more of these pupils speak English as an additional language or have SEND, their attainment overall is below that of other pupils. Currently, there is a greater proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Years 4 and 5. In these classes, the attainment of the disadvantaged pupils matches that of other pupils because the ongoing additional support they have received has helped them to catch up.
- Some pupils currently in key stage 2 have gaps in their knowledge and skills. For example, some Year 4 pupils are unsure about subtraction methods in mathematics. The mathematics curriculum has been reviewed and the subject is now being taught more methodically so that younger pupils are developing more secure knowledge.
- Some teaching in key stage 2 is not consistently challenging the most able pupils. As a result, some are at risk of not achieving their potential at the end of the key stage.
- Most pupils take pride in their work. They are taught handwriting from Year 2 onwards and many maintain high standards of presentation. A few pupils, however, have been allowed to become untidy and careless in their presentation.

Early years provision

Good

- The quality of provision in the early years has improved. The new early years leader, who joined the school in September 2018, has a good understanding of what needs to improve and has made sensible changes. She ensures that children are carefully assessed and ongoing observations ensure that staff are aware of each child's next steps.
- On average, children enter the Reception Year with skills below those typical for their age. The school's ethos, centred on engaging children and developing their curiosity of the world through outdoor learning, has supported their social and physical development effectively. However, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development has been below that seen nationally because children have been slower to develop basic skills in reading, writing and number.
- This year, teachers have placed greater emphasis on children acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. Adult-led teaching sessions are sharply delivered and capture children's interest. Most children currently in the Reception class show a secure grasp of phonics, have begun to write in sentences and can use numbers up to 20 with confidence.
- Scrutiny of children's workbooks shows they systematically learn to link sounds to letters across the autumn and spring terms. While this is giving the children a solid

basis for development, some of the most able children are not progressing into writing words and sentences as soon as they could.

- The immediate outdoor area and the wider nature park are used extensively to enrich the curriculum. During the inspection, children were learning first-hand about mini-beasts. They were able to collect bugs in Petri dishes and categorise them using information charts. Children displayed a good level of knowledge about invertebrates, insects and arachnids.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have structured the adult-led programme of teaching of phonics carefully. There are well-designed activities available for children to support their reading, writing and number when they choose what to do for themselves. Good planning and some precise teaching are helping children to catch up. At times, however, other adults miss opportunities to extend or deepen children's understanding as they play. For example, some boys could have been encouraged to count or to measure the height of sunflowers when they showed interest in them.
- Children behave well and are kind and supportive of one another. Teachers and other adults establish clear rules and routines to structure the day. The ratio of adults to children is high, so supervision of children is good. The welfare requirements of the early years foundation stage are fully met.
- There are good arrangements in place to help children transfer to the Reception Year from other nursery providers. Parents are also actively encouraged to stay and play and to support their children's development at home.

School details

Unique reference number	139729
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10087627

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	152
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Shelagh Keogh
Headteacher	Susan Percy
Telephone number	0191 273 9477
Website	www.westnewcastleacademy.org
Email address	admin@westnewcastleacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	12–13 May 2015

Information about this school

- Newcastle West Academy is a free school. It opened in September 2013. The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Currently, the school has children in the Reception Year and pupils in Years 1 to 5.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average. An average proportion of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school runs its own breakfast club and after-school provision.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

- There is a separate nursery education provider called The Little Lotus Nursery on the same site. This provider is subject to separate inspection by Ofsted.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector met with the headteacher, five governors, including the chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, a group of teachers, middle leaders and the early years leader.
- The inspector also met with a group of pupils and spoke to others more informally at social times and during lessons.
- The inspector listened to some pupils read and discussed their interest in books with them.
- The inspector visited lessons in each of the school's classes. Several observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. During lesson visits, the inspector talked to pupils about their learning and sampled a range of pupils' workbooks.
- The inspector looked at some support plans for pupils with SEND and considered assessment information for this group of pupils.
- The inspector scrutinised a sample of pupils' books from Years 3, 4 and 5 in English and mathematics. The sample of books included pupils who entered the school with different starting points, some of whom were disadvantaged pupils.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies and assessment information. The inspector also looked at records of attendance and safeguarding information.
- The inspector took account of the 56 responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, the inspector took account of the 18 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and looked at the school's own parental survey results. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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