

Inspection of Byker Primary School

Commercial Road, Byker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE6 2AT

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 February 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since July 2017. The school received an ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Act on 11 and 12 October 2023. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Byker Primary embody the school's ethos of children of all backgrounds and cultures being welcomed and valued. Comments from pupils, such as 'We are not blood related, but we are all one family,' reflect the inclusive nature of the school. Pupils benefit from the effective provision the school puts in place for their wider development beyond the academic curriculum. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective. Pupils are happy. Despite this, the number of pupils who are persistently or severely absent from school is too high. Many pupils are late to school. These pupils miss out on valuable learning.

In some cases, pupils meet the school's high expectations for their achievements. Pupils enjoy lessons and talk with enthusiasm about their recent learning. However, the school does not identify and address gaps in pupils' learning sufficiently well. This means that some pupils do not have a secure base for future learning.

There are warm and positive relationships between pupils and staff. Many pupils show high levels of respect to others. Behaviour in school is positive, in the main. However, this is not consistent over time. Bullying is rare.

Parents and carers are generally positive about the school. Their comments highlight staff who 'genuinely care'.

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

The school has recently undergone a review of the curriculum. Many of the resulting changes are new and are not having the intended impact at this point in time. Expectations of what pupils should achieve are high. In some subjects, pupils do well over time. They build their knowledge and skills from insecure foundational knowledge on entry to school. Pupils can talk with some confidence about their more recent learning. For example, they discuss different biomes in geography. However, the school's checks on learning across many curriculum subjects do not precisely identify gaps and misconceptions in pupils' understanding or skills. Pupils' do not have a secure base of knowledge on which to build further. Therefore, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Children in early years get off to a strong start. Skilled staff implement the curriculum in line with the school's intentions. They place a sharp focus on communication and language as part of the quality curriculum offer. Staff model and use vocabulary effectively. For example, children use that vocabulary to talk confidently about plants that need 'soil, water, sun and oxygen' to grow. Other children manipulate numbers with confidence. They develop an increasingly secure understanding of letter sounds and a broad base of phonics knowledge.

Too many pupils, including some with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not have their needs identified with sufficient precision. This means that provision for these pupils does not allow them to achieve as well as they might. A large

number of pupils are awaiting appropriate referrals to external agencies. However, some pupils do have their needs identified accurately. Staff then provide effective provision to allow these pupils to achieve well.

Pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read, who attend regularly and arrive on time, build their phonics knowledge well. Insecure foundational knowledge on entry to school, coupled with poor attendance for some, means that some pupils do not meet national expectations in phonics by the end of Year 1. Over time, pupils do become increasingly confident and fluent readers.

Behaviour in school is variable. Some staff do not feel well supported to deal with challenging behaviour from a small minority of pupils. However, there have been some improvements made. For example, the school has taken highly effective action to deal with instances of racism. These instances are now very rare.

Over time, leaders have overseen a gradual decrease in the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. However, this proportion is still high. Pupils who are regularly absent or late for school miss out on crucial learning. This impacts on their ability to keep up with their peers. As a result, they do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils' wider development has been carefully considered. A well-planned programme of educational visits and visitors into school enhances pupils' awareness of their place within the wider community. They develop a keen sense of equality. Pupils' understanding of the importance of tolerance and respect for others is well embedded. The school's status as a 'school of sanctuary', fostering a culture of welcome and belonging for those seeking safety, exemplifies this element of pupils' wider development. The high-quality pastoral support available to pupils helps them to manage their emotions more consistently.

The school has undergone a period of turbulence within its leadership. Many new initiatives have been implemented in a short space of time. Many staff feel the school takes their workload and well-being into account. However, some do not agree. Governors are well informed and fulfil their roles well. They use this information to offer challenge to the school. Actions are taken in the best interests of pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In many curriculum subjects, the school's checks on learning do not precisely identify gaps and misconceptions in pupils' understanding or skills. This means that gaps in knowledge are not addressed swiftly, and this prevents pupils from securing the intended knowledge in their long-term memory. The school should ensure that checks

on pupils' learning and understanding are embedded across these curriculum subjects so that gaps in knowledge and understanding can be closed quickly.

- There is some inconsistency in the impact that subject monitoring has across the wider curriculum. Monitoring activities do not consistently lead to necessary and timely action being taken to improve classroom practice. The school must ensure that its monitoring of the curriculum supports staff to deliver the curriculum as intended.
- The school's approaches to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality are not effective enough. This means that a significant proportion of pupils miss out on important learning and struggle to catch up when they are in school. The school must ensure that its work to secure improvements in pupils' attendance and punctuality has sustained impact for a greater number of pupils.
- Some pupils, including those with SEND, do not have their needs identified with sufficient precision. This means that, at times, provision for these pupils does not allow them to achieve as highly as they should. The school should ensure that timely referrals to appropriate external support allows for precise identification of pupils' and for effective provision to be put in place so that pupils achieve well.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108458
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	10346250
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nick Kemp
Headteacher	Michelle Donnison
Website	www.bykerprimary.org
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 October 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been a significant change in the senior leadership team since the previous inspection. Following a restructure of senior leadership, a number of assistant headteachers have been appointed.
- The school has provision for two-year-old children.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- A morning club operates on site under the management of the school.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, some other school staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography, physical education and religious education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector also discussed the curriculum and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- An inspector listened to pupils from Years 1 to 5 reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- An inspector spoke with some parents at the end of the school day.
- An inspector had a tour of the school with a representative of the school council.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the online staff and pupil surveys, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

Emma Robertson

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