

Nunnykirk Centre for Dyslexia

Nunnykirk Hall, Netherwitton, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 4PB

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Turbulence as a result of significant changes in leadership has resulted in insufficient progress to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable. Consequently, pupils' progress in English and mathematics is inconsistent across the school. Teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are not sufficiently high.
- The role of middle leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is insufficiently developed. This limits the ability of some leaders to improve the school's effectiveness.
- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum enables pupils to make strong progress in a range of subjects, including the expressive arts and computing.
- The quality of information provided to parents and carers about their child's progress requires improvement. The information and support provided for pupils and their parents to facilitate progression to further education, training and employment require further development.
- Leaders do not analyse information about the school's performance with sufficient rigour. For example, the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is not evaluated well enough.
- School improvement plans, while focused on the right priorities, are not precise enough so that governors can hold leaders to account for their work.
- Occasionally, leaders do not act promptly enough on the outcomes of reviews of pupils' education, health and care plans (EHCPs).

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has accurately identified the areas for school improvement. Senior leaders have a clear picture of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff are well trained and are confident about what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Pupils say that they feel safe. They are well cared for at the school.
- Governors are ambitious for the school and now provide better support and challenge for the new leadership team.
- Pupils are well behaved and they are respectful to one another. They work hard in their lessons.
- Leaders' effective work has resulted in improvements to pupils' attendance.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - effective partnerships are developed with all stakeholders, particularly parents, to share the vision, values and aims of the school
 - parents receive timely information about the progress of their child
 - the curriculum for expressive arts and for computing is planned and implemented well so that pupils make strong progress
 - sufficient resources are provided to enable pupils to become competent and confident users of technology
 - pupils' EHCPs are reviewed in a timely manner and agreed outcomes are promptly implemented
 - middle leaders contribute effectively to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the areas they lead
 - the newly established system for assessment is fully embedded across all curriculum areas
 - the performance information collected by leaders is effectively analysed to support strategic decision-making and the impact of additional funding is evaluated thoroughly
 - the school improvement plan includes a clear timescale to evaluate progress towards desired outcomes
 - the school complies with the Department for Education's (DfE) publication requirements for non-maintained special schools by publishing a school prospectus.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make consistently good progress by ensuring that:
 - work set for pupils is well matched to pupils' needs, including the most able
 - teachers use effective feedback and questioning to check and deepen pupils' understanding
 - teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support teaching and learning
 - pupils present their work neatly.
- Improve the quality of pupils' personal development and welfare by:
 - providing pupils and parents with detailed information about courses available at key stage 4
 - ensuring that pupils are well informed about the possible routes into further education, employment or training when they leave the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not made sufficient progress in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The many changes to the leadership team have hampered leaders' work to improve the school.
- Over time, leaders have allowed the breadth, balance and quality of the curriculum to weaken. Leaders' emphasis on improving outcomes in English and mathematics by increasing the taught time for these subjects has resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to develop skills in the expressive arts, including music, are limited.
- The role of middle leaders is not consistently well developed. Middle leaders support teachers with planning and teach alongside colleagues. However, middle leaders are not sufficiently involved in checking on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This limits their ability to contribute to improvements in these areas.
- Leaders do not take consistently prompt action to respond to the outcome of the reviews of pupils' EHCPs. At times, this results in a delay by the local authority when considering the decisions agreed at review meetings and providing finalised plans to parents.
- Many parents commented that since joining the school, their child's attitude to school and learning has substantially improved. All pupils join the school part-way through their school career. For some pupils with previously high absence rates there has been a rapid improvement to their attendance since admission to Nunnykirk. Leaders have recently started to work closely with other agencies to improve attendance and challenge persistent absence. As a result of this effective partnership working, attendance is improving and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is rapidly falling.
- Parents have varying views about the school. While some parents are very satisfied with the quality of education the school provides, others are more critical about the changes to school since the previous inspection. Leaders, including governors, understand that it is important to effectively engage with parents and other key partners to share their vision and ambition for the school.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher has promptly and accurately identified priorities for school improvement. The headteacher, supported by the newly appointed deputy headteacher, has quickly introduced an appropriate programme to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders have prepared a detailed improvement plan which focuses on the correct priorities. However, this does not include a clear timescale to enable leaders to effectively evaluate the impact of their actions.
- At the beginning of this school year, leaders introduced a new assessment system to enable teachers to record pupils' progress and to identify the next steps in their learning. However, the new assessment system is not fully embedded across the curriculum.
- The new headteacher has quickly established partnerships with other schools and agencies. This work has led to improved support for the headteacher and has

increased leaders' capacity to secure school improvement. These developments are beginning to have a positive impact. The partnership with the local authority has helped to improve the quality of the school's self-evaluation and the monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

- Leaders use pupil premium funding to provide additional support for pupils. However, leaders do not evaluate the impact of their spending decisions effectively. Therefore, they do not know whether the funding is having the desired effect on improving pupils' outcomes.
- The school does not meet the DfE's education publication requirements for non-maintained special schools. The school is required to publish a prospectus and to make this available either online or as a printed copy. A prospectus was not available at the time of the inspection.

Governance of the school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been numerous changes to the membership of the governing body. New members, with a wide range of relevant skills and experience, have been recruited, including a governor with experience of working in a special school and another from the local authority. A new chair of the governing body was elected at the beginning of this school year.
- The school has experienced a period of significant change. Governors correctly recognise that under the leadership of the new headteacher, the school is now better placed to improve and become more effective.
- Governors have a strong vision and ambition for the school. They work effectively to challenge and support the new headteacher and deputy headteacher and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors meet regularly and have developed links to check the impact of key members of staff who are responsible for different aspects of the school's work, for example safeguarding.
- Governors identified that the school needed to develop better partnerships to improve its effectiveness. They have begun this work. They recognise that the relationship with parents is an important aspect of the school's work and that more needs to be done to share their vision and ambition for the school with parents.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that safeguarding policies and procedures have been kept under review and that they meet the current statutory guidance.
- Leaders provide regular safeguarding training. As a result, staff and governors are well informed about safeguarding. Staff are knowledgeable about the child protection procedures and safeguarding risks and they know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare.
- Leaders take prompt action to refer concerns to the local authority's children's services department. Detailed safeguarding records are stored securely and evidence that the school works effectively with other agencies.

- Leaders routinely present safeguarding information to the governing body. The nominated safeguarding governor meets regularly with the designated leader for safeguarding to review policies and procedures.
- Pupils report that they feel safe in school and that teachers effectively manage the few incidents of bullying. Pupils are helped to stay safe online through regular online safety training in lessons and assemblies. The arrangements for pupils arriving at school on transport are well designed to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment between and within subjects.
- In some classes, pupils make good progress because work is well structured to meet their needs and teachers use questions effectively to check pupils' understanding and deepen their learning. However, this is not consistently the case across the school, including in English and mathematics. In particular, the work provided for the most able pupils is often not sufficiently demanding. As a result, the most able pupils do not make consistently good progress.
- Pupils' skills in computing are not developed consistently well. There is variability in the extent to which teachers understand how pupils' computing skills should be assessed.
- The presentation of pupils' work in books is variable. For example, a check of pupils' mathematics workbooks demonstrated that some pupils had drawn lines and angles freehand, rather than using a ruler and protractor. Middle leaders have prepared guidance to improve the presentation of pupils' work. However, this guidance has not been implemented consistently by all staff.
- Teaching assistants make a variable contribution to pupils' learning. In some classes, teaching assistants provide effective support to individual pupils and small groups. However, this is not consistent across the school.
- The time allocated to tutor time at the end of each afternoon is not always used effectively. In some classes, teachers lead useful group discussions to help pupils review their work and plan for the next day. In other classes, pupils are not engaged in sufficiently meaningful activities.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to learning. They work independently, but also cooperate effectively in small groups. Pupils enjoy productive relationships with staff.
- The quality of teaching in physical education (PE) has improved. Activities are closely matched to pupils' differing levels of physical fitness and ability. Pupils are making much stronger progress as a result of this better teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.

- The school's careers education programme is underdeveloped. Pupils and parents do not have enough information about the options to study for qualifications at key stage 4 or the opportunities available to pupils when they leave school.
- The withdrawal of the annual work experience programme has resulted in some pupils, and their parents, feeling that they are less well informed about the options available for continuing in education, training or employment.
- Pupils are confident to talk about their work and achievements. Pupils say that they enjoy school and that teachers help them to do their best and listen to their views.
- Pupils expressed views about the limited opportunities for extra-curricular clubs and activities. Following the end of the school's boarding provision, which included the opportunity for some pupils to have an extended school day, there are now no after-school clubs. Leaders have taken action to provide clubs which take place during the school day. In addition, pupils take part in a wide range of regional sports events, residential visits and community activities. Some pupils have successfully achieved the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- Pupils develop an appropriate understanding of fundamental British values through the personal and social development curriculum, in assemblies and through displays.
- There are strong and respectful relationships between pupils and staff. Staff know pupils well and they provide sensitive care and support. Staff and leaders have a strong focus on meeting the personal development needs of each pupil.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and pupils respond positively to these expectations. Pupils behave well as they move around school.
- Pupils' behaviour in class is good. They have strong attitudes to learning and work cooperatively. Staff provide regular feedback throughout lessons and pupils are rewarded with merit awards for good behaviour and their achievements. Pupils receive certificates, awards and shields in the annual end-of-year achievement assembly.
- Pupils greet staff and visitors respectfully. Pupils are proud of their achievements and are confident to discuss their work and share their views about the school and their hopes for the future.
- Most pupils say that they feel safe, that there is little bullying and that teachers effectively manage pupils' behaviour. However, a few pupils expressed concerns about the behaviour of a small number of pupils. Pupils are confident that they can talk to an adult if they are worried about anything. Most parents agreed that their child is happy, safe and well cared for.
- For many pupils, their attendance improves dramatically once they start at Nunnykirk. Pupils often join Nunnykirk from mainstream schools, where they have not been successful and their attendance has been poor. The developing partnership with other agencies has had a notable impact on improving attendance, particularly for those pupils who have been persistently absent.
- Recently, there was a sharp increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions. Leaders worked closely with the local authority and other agencies to secure appropriate

placements for a group of pupils who needed a different type of provision. As a result, during the current year, there has been a reduction in the number of behaviour incidents and exclusions.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics, is inconsistent. While a minority of pupils make strong progress, too many do not make securely good progress. Teaching is not consistently matched to pupils' needs and there is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils.
- Inspection evidence endorses leaders' view of the progress of groups of pupils. There is little difference between the progress of different groups of pupils, including those that are disadvantaged.
- Leaders have identified pupils who are not making secure progress. Pupils falling behind in their learning take part in catch-up activities. This is enabling pupils to regain lost learning.
- An increased focus on English and mathematics has reduced the time spent on other aspects of the curriculum. This, coupled with the quality of the curriculum in some subject areas, has led to variable progress in subjects such as the performing and expressive arts and computing. Leaders know that this needs to be addressed and have plans in place to broaden the curriculum from September.
- In previous years, pupils transferred to the school's sixth-form to continue their studies. In 2017 and 2018, sixth-form students successfully achieved GCSEs in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, art, photography and land-based studies, and functional skills awards in English.
- Leaders have successfully restructured the PE programme. Pupils who were previously disengaged from school are now actively participating in PE and making strong progress. Pupils successfully take part in local and regional special school sports events.
- In the previous school year, 11 pupils successfully completed the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at bronze level and a further five pupils achieved the silver award.
- The school's work experience programme has previously supported pupils to develop skills which have enabled a number of pupils to successfully transfer to employment. However, this programme has been withdrawn in the current academic year.
- Pupils' progress in computing and the opportunities to support pupils' learning through the use of technology have been significantly hampered due to the limited resources available in the school.

School details

Unique reference number	122390
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10087549

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	9 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Roberts
Headteacher	Alex Blackburn
Telephone number	01670 772685
Website	www.nunnykirk.school/website
Email address	secretary@nunnykirk.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 February 2017

Information about this school

- Nunnykirk is a smaller than average-sized special school. The school is located in a Grade I listed building in rural Northumberland, approximately 10 miles from the nearest town.
- The school supports children from a large geographical area. All pupils are transported to and from school. Most travel on home-to-school transport provided by their local authority. A few pupils are brought to school by their parents or carers.
- All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities as a result of their specific learning difficulties. These are primarily dyslexia. An increasing number of pupils are joining the school with additional learning difficulties, including autism and social, emotional and mental health needs. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in the school's leadership team. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2018. In addition, there have been changes to the membership of the governing body. A new chair of the governing body was appointed in September 2018.

- Following the previous inspection, the school no longer offers boarding provision. In addition, the school's sixth-form provision has been suspended.
- All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils entitled to receive pupil premium is slightly below the national average.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.
- There is no statutory requirement for non-maintained schools to publish information on a school website. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed a website. The school's policies, including the safeguarding policy, are made available to parents online.
- The school has not published a prospectus. As a result, the school does not meet the publication requirements for non-maintained schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors, accompanied by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, visited parts of lessons across a range of subjects. During their visits to lessons, inspectors spoke to teachers and teaching assistants and looked at planning and assessment records. Inspectors spoke to pupils and looked at their workbooks.
- Inspectors observed pupils arriving at school, at breaktime, at lunchtime and as they moved around school. An inspector held a meeting with a group of pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to discuss the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and information about the curriculum, pupils' progress, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the use of additional funding. An inspector met members of the school's middle leadership group.
- Inspectors considered 16 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including free-text responses. Inspectors also considered the school's survey of parent views. An inspector held a meeting with one parent and attended a parents' coffee morning.
- Inspectors considered 15 responses to Ofsted's online survey of pupils' views and the views of five members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- An inspector met with four governors and held a meeting with a representative of the local authority.

Inspection team

George Gilmore, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paul Barton

Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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