

Inspection of Morpeth Stobhillgate First School

Stobhillgate, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2HA

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 December 2024

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Ben Henderson. This school is part of the Cheviot Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Alice Witherow, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Carvin.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school provides a calm, welcoming environment for pupils. Children get the best possible start to their education in the wonderful early years setting. Pupils and staff have positive relationships. These make the pupils feel safe and valued.

Pupils are kind, considerate and respectful of each other. In classes, there is a buzz of excitement as teachers prepare engaging, motivating lessons. Pupils are respectful of others; they listen to what their classmates say. They enjoy working in groups and make sure everyone is included. Behaviour around the school is exemplary.

The school teaches pupils about the importance of respecting and including all people and that bullying is wrong. As a result, pupils all get along well with each other. Pupils are happy, they enjoy coming to school. They make the most of the very broad range of opportunities on offer. Pupils work hard, they persevere when faced with challenges and embrace the high expectations staff have of them.

The school provides opportunities for parents and carers to come into school and work alongside their children. These enhance and enrich children's learning.

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

School leaders have created a vision that all staff share. As a result, curriculum thinking, teaching approaches and strategies to manage behaviour are now consistent. The curriculum ensures that pupils learn the vital knowledge and skills they need. Lessons are carefully structured. Teachers have the expertise to present effective lessons. They set pupils a range of well-considered activities that help pupils gain and remember key knowledge over time. The high-quality curriculum and effective implementation of subjects means that, overall, pupils achieve highly. At times, tasks that pupils are given are too challenging. As a result, a small number of pupils get confused.

The provision in the early years is outstanding. Staff provide a learning environment that enables children to deepen their understanding of science, art, reading and writing. They organise the classroom so children have access to high-quality activities. As a result, children are curious and ask incisive questions. Staff demonstrate how to use equipment so children can be independent and use resources appropriately. For example, children can confidently use a light projector to make shadows and then create art from the shadows they make. Subject leaders work in partnership with the early years leader to make sure that children learn vital knowledge that prepares them for Year 1. 'Target memories' help children in the early years remember what they have studied. As pupils move through the school, the 'target memories' are linked to each subject and used to check pupils' knowledge. Teachers also regularly make use of other strategies to identify misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge in each of the subjects.

The reading curriculum enables pupils to become confident, fluent readers. Staff introduce letter sounds in the summer term for Nursery children. This prepares them well for the reading programme in the Reception Year. All staff are highly skilled in teaching pupils to read. Pupils quickly learn the sounds that letters make and have lots of opportunities to apply reading knowledge and skills in daily reading sessions. Staff provide extra reading opportunities for pupils who require additional support.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. The special educational needs coordinator works alongside teachers to identify pupils who may need additional support. Once identified, pupils receive the support that they need to access the curriculum. Staff adapt the curriculum using, for example, visual aids and word banks. They also provide resources such as wobble cushions, fidget toys and resistance bands, which help pupils to focus and sit comfortably in lessons.

The school teaches pupils to be empathetic and thoughtful. Pupils demonstrate exceptional behaviours and attitudes to learning. The personal, social, health and education curriculum includes a selection of reading books that teaches pupils about diversity and inclusion. Pupils take part in community events, such as singing at a local care home and supporting a food bank. They are members of local sporting clubs, thanks to guidance from the school. Pupils take part in events with the Pearl of Africa organisation and Zambezi Trust so they have a wider understanding of international issues.

Trustees and the governing body know the school well. Through regular visits to school and meetings with staff, they hold school leaders to account. Leaders are considerate of workload and staff well-being. Staff at trust schools work in partnership to share practice and resources. School and trust leaders work in partnership to ensure pupils receive a wonderful school experience.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, the subject matter in lessons is too challenging for some pupils to understand. A small number of pupils find lessons confusing and do not secure the intended knowledge. Staff should ensure that the content they teach in lessons is carefully matched to pupils' need and appropriate support is given when required.

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	147820
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10346746
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Carvin
CEO of the trust	Alice Witherow
Headteacher	Ben Henderson
Website	www.sfs.cheviotlt.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has five classes, catering for pupils from Nursery to Year 4.
- Morpeth Stobhillgate First School converted to become an academy in April 2019. When its predecessor school, Morpeth Stobhillgate First School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be requires improvement for overall effectiveness.

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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and geography. 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. They also considered other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of behaviour and what it is like to attend this school. They listened to a range of pupils from different year groups reading to familiar adults.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body, trustees, the CEO and the school improvement partner.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments, as well as the responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

David Milligan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Cathy Lee

Ofsted Inspector

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