

Whittonstall First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122235
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	380431
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	David Shearsmith

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Dale
Headteacher	Jacqui Lorimer
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2006
School address	Whittonstall Consett DH8 9JN
Telephone number	01207 560325
Email address	admin@whittonstall.northumberland.sch.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



© Crown copyright 2012

Introduction

Inspection team

David Shearsmith

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed five teachers teaching 16 lessons and parts of lessons of which five were joint observations with the headteacher. Meetings were held with members of the governing body and the school staff. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. He observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books and a number of documents, including those relating to development planning, safeguarding and child protection. The inspector also analysed 40 parental and carers' questionnaires and those completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

This school is very much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The majority are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average. The school has gained Healthy school status and holds Basic Skills Quality Mark and Sports Active Mark awards. The school is part of a federation with another local school, with the headteacher spending half of her time in each school. Since the previous inspection a new headteacher has been in post on a temporary basis since September 2011 and permanently since January 2012.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. Pupils’ behaviour and safety are outstanding. Pupils make good progress and their attainment is above what you would expect for their age when they leave the school. The school is not outstanding, however, because progress is inconsistent at Key Stage 1. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good with indoor provision that meets children’s needs well; however, they have insufficient access to the outdoor provision.
- Teaching is generally good throughout the school with some lessons that are outstanding although teaching is inconsistent in Key Stage 1 and progress is not always as good as it is in the rest of the school. Relationships between the teachers and pupils are excellent and there is a very calm, purposeful and motivating learning environment.
- Pupils typically behave extremely well and really enjoy being at school. Parents, carers and staff agree that behaviour is mainly outstanding. Pupils get on very well with each other. The youngest pupils in the school work exceptionally well together in and out of the classroom. This has a very positive impact on their learning. They feel very safe in school and conduct themselves exceptionally well at all times.
- The headteacher, staff and the governing body know the school’s strengths and areas for development very well and performance management is used well to promote improvements. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding over time. The curriculum is good, with much that is outstanding. The quality of teaching is mainly good, although leaders do not always pay enough attention to evaluating pupils’ progress during lesson observations, or analysis of their work. The school’s capacity for improvement is good as its self-evaluation is broadly accurate, appropriate priorities for development have been identified and impact of improvements made are already evident across the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement at Key Stage 1 by:
 - improving the quality of teaching so pupils are actively involved in learning and make consistently good progress in all lessons
 - ensuring that work is well-matched to the needs of all pupils.

- Improve children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that children have constant access to the outdoor area throughout the day
 - ensuring that planning provides more opportunities for child-initiated activities in the outdoor area.

- Improve monitoring and evaluation at all levels by:
 - ensuring that there is a greater focus on evaluating pupils' progress through lesson observations and through the analysis of work in pupils' books.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils achieve well and by the time they leave Year 4 their attainment in English, including reading, and in mathematics is above average. Pupils enjoy school and are eager to learn. Where the work set is interesting and matched well to their needs, they listen intently, answer readily and pose their own questions to extend their understanding. The most consistently effective learning occurs in Key Stage 2, where progress is often outstanding. Here learning moves on at a good pace; the teacher's high expectations and pupils' desire to learn create an industrious learning environment. In an English lesson, the teacher's expert subject knowledge and input motivated pupils and prepared them very well for the writing task ahead. Pupils produced writing of a good standard for their ages. They used a range of vocabulary, spelled complex words correctly and used punctuation knowledgeably. Pupils describe mathematics as 'exciting'. They show good development of calculation skills and work well co-operatively to solve mathematical problems as seen in a lesson on multiplication using tens, hundreds and decimal points. Pupils have good skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and make very good use of their individual laptop computers to research and present work in a range of subjects.

Children enter the Nursery with skills which are typical for their age. By the end of the Reception year, attainment in all areas of learning is usually above average. Reception children are in a mixed-age class, but benefit from specific opportunities to work as a single year group when improving their basic skills of literacy and numeracy. They learn well through play and experience adult-directed activities and those they initiate themselves, although they have insufficient access to the outdoors. From their starting point children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. This progress continues through Key Stage 1, although is not always consistently good in some lessons. There are many good opportunities for pupils to engage in first-hand practical work, although sometimes, learning is not as effective as it could be. For example, in a lesson on bar graphs some activities did not consistently challenge and extend all pupils' knowledge equally well. Currently, pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 is in line with expectations. They make good

progress in reading so their attainment improves and is above expectations by the time they leave the school. The school has a systematic programme for the teaching of letters and sounds across the school, which is mainly well-taught.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, receive good individual support, tailored well to their specific needs. This supports their good and sometimes better progress. Because the school knows each pupil well as an individual, any gaps in their learning are quickly identified and tackled. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the school's work and the progress their children make and the inspection confirmed this.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good overall. Some teaching of Key Stage 2 pupils is outstanding. In the most effective lessons, the content is stimulating, capturing and holding pupils' interests very well. This promotes pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural experiences very well and is evident in many lessons. The well-planned creative curriculum, coupled with high teacher expectations and lessons which are briskly paced ensures that pupils are engaged and on task. In the best lessons detailed lesson-planning, good organisation and excellent use of assessment information ensure that the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities are also fully met. Teachers' very secure subject knowledge, coupled with good rapport with pupils, often promotes outstanding learning. These features are consistently evident at Key Stage 2 and sometimes evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage where focused activities and the promotion of children's' basic skills are a key strength, particularly in developing phonic skills. Provision is good and sometimes activities inside are outstanding, but children do not have sufficient open access to the outdoor provision to initiate their own learning.

Teaching at Key Stage 1 ranges from good to satisfactory. Where teaching is less effective activities are not always well-pitched to meet the needs of all pupils. Sometimes, when pupils spend too long listening to the teacher, the pace of learning slows, as in a dance lesson where pupils spent less time being active.

Throughout the school, teachers' questioning of pupils is consistently good, as is the quality of marking, which regularly informs pupils of how well they are achieving and how to improve. Pupils have clear improvement targets and use their learning ladders to measure their own progress. Pupils are regularly involved in thinking about and commenting on their own learning and how they might improve it. Parents and carers have very high regard for all staff in the school and how well they support their child's learning and inspection evidence confirmed this view.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in a range of contexts is of a high standard and makes a strong contribution to their learning. Pupils play and work together exceptionally well and are friendly and polite to each other and the adults around them. In discussions and in their responses to the questionnaire, pupils agree that behaviour is excellent. They say that because the school is small, 'everyone knows everyone'. Pupils have a very clear understanding of what constitutes bullying and of what to do if they experience it personally or see it happening to others; they say that there is no bullying at the school. Pupils' attendance is above average and they are very punctual. The parents and carers who completed the questionnaire mainly agree that behaviour is outstanding and that the school deals well with any behaviour or bullying issues. Many commented very positively on the

way in which the school cares for their children, keeps them safe and helps them to achieve well. Pupils know how to stay safe in a range of contexts. Their forest school experiences, such as building fires, make a very strong contribution to their understanding of how to manage risk. Pupils also have a good understanding of safe internet use, both at home and in school. Procedures to deal with any minor behaviour issues are thorough and followed correctly. The school's caring, family ethos and its good programme of personal, social and health education add much to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.

Leadership and management

The new headteacher has a very clear vision for school improvement and is resolute in her drive to maintain high levels of achievement for all pupils. She is ably supported by a committed and enthusiastic staff team. Effective professional development, including the increasing sharing of best practice with their partner school in the federation, is helping to drive improvements. Self-evaluation highlights the right priorities for further improvement. The good level of experience and expertise of subject leaders is adding to their sense of purpose and driving improvements at a rapid pace. The school is successful in ensuring that pupils have an equal chance to learn and succeed. Any evidence of discrimination or inequality is tackled exceptionally well. The school's tracking data shows that pupils' progress is accelerating due to better assessment systems that clearly demonstrate that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

The school meets all safeguarding requirements. Staff and the governing body have gained comprehensive awareness of safeguarding and child protection issues through regular training. Documentation, such as risk assessments, is comprehensive and detailed. Increasingly, the curriculum provides positive, memorable first-hand experiences and rich opportunities for lively, high-quality learning. The curriculum contributes very well to the pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The effective use of partnership-working is a particular strength. Links with other schools, particularly through the federation, are increasing learning opportunities which develop pupils' imagination and creativity, for example through the school's forest school programme. This also includes developing national and international links which promote a very good awareness of global issues. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a variety of social settings in the local and wider community and are given every chance to take on responsibility in and around the school. Members of the governing body have an excellent grasp of the needs of the community the school serves. They challenge and hold the school to account in positive ways and increasingly have a strong understanding of where the school needs to improve further. The school's extremely positive engagement with parents and carers ensures that they are well-informed about all aspects of school life.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whittonstall First School, Consett, DH8 9JN

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking with you, listening to your views, and seeing you learn in and out of the classroom. Your school is a good one and one that is continually improving.

Here are some of the things that I thought that you, and your school, do particularly well.

- Your behaviour is excellent, you know how to keep yourselves safe and you learn and play well together.
- You love coming to school and you are very keen to learn.
- Your teachers make your lessons interesting and they help you to learn well.
- Adults in the school make sure that you are very well looked after.
- You have an excellent understanding of other cultures and about the difference between right and wrong as well as a fascination about the world around you.

I have asked your headteacher and all the staff to make your school even better by:

- making sure that children in the Nursery and Reception classes have more time to learn outside
- ensuring that everyone in Key Stage 1 makes better progress
- making sure that when other adults are observing your lessons they look more closely at the progress you are making in lessons and in your books.

I am sure you can also help your school to do even better by helping all the staff to improve your school. I would also like to wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

David Shearsmith
Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.