

Wark Church of England First School

Wark, Hexham, Northumberland, NE48 3LS

Inspection dates 20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a good school where pupils' outstanding behaviour makes a significant contribution to their learning.
- Pupils' achievement is good and they reach standards that are above those expected in most areas by the time they leave in Year 4.
- Progress in reading and writing are especially good because of the intensive efforts to improve pupils' skills in those areas.
- Teaching and learning across the school is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers are very enthusiastic and pupils say they make learning fun.
- Teaching assistants play an important and effective part in ensuring that pupils who have additional needs make good progress.
- Pupils' feel extremely safe and are looked after well.
- The headteacher and other leaders have brought about many improvements, including the progress pupils make and in the quality of teaching.
- Staff are very positive about all aspects of the school. They work very closely together and flexible teaching arrangements cater well for classes of mixed age and ability.
- There is a wide range of additional activities such as trips and visitors. These develop pupils' personal skills and prepare them well for the future.
- The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in mathematics is not quite as good as it is in other areas. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to apply their calculation skills to solving challenging mathematical problems.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not always give pupils clear criteria which help them to understand how successfully they are learning.
- Governors do not hold the school to account rigorously enough for pupils' academic achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 11 lessons, taught by five teachers, and looked at the work of many of the children and pupils in all subjects.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, development planning, the checks made on the quality of teaching and also information about teachers' professional development.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and with the teachers who have responsibilities within the school.
- The inspector met with two governors and had a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The inspectors spoke to the children and pupils in the school in lessons, breaks and lunchtimes. One inspector also spoke formally to a group of pupils at lunchtime.
- One inspector listened to four pupils in Key Stage 1 read at lunchtime.
- The seven responses to the staff questionnaire and the 14 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were analysed.

Inspection team

Alison Thomson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Angela James

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wark Church of England First School is much smaller than the average sized primary school. There are two classes, one for Reception children and Key Stage 1 pupils and another for Key Stage 2 pupils.
- Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is much lower than average. This is funding available for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils in local authority care and those whose parents are in the armed forces. The pupil premium group in the school is those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant turnover in staff.
- The current headteacher took up the post of executive headteacher in September 2010. She is also the headteacher of a nearby school, Greenhaugh First School, and divides her time between the two schools.
- There is a privately run pre-school on the site which is not managed by the governing body and the report for this school can be found separately on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise pupils' achievement, especially in mathematics by:
 - developing pupils' calculation skills though increased application of these skills to solving challenging mathematical problems
 - ensuring teachers regularly give pupils clear ways to enable them to understand how well they are learning
 - the governing body holding to the school to account more rigorously in respect of pupils' academic achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception class with variable levels of skill, but generally with those typically expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with skills that are at least in line with those found nationally.
- Progress throughout school is good and pupils leave at the end of Year 4 with attainment that is consistently above expected levels of attainment in reading and writing. A strong focus in these areas has ensured the progress of the majority of pupils is outstanding in English.
- Progress in mathematics, a previous area of underachievement is improving strongly. Current data shows that most pupils make good progress in mathematics. Attainment at the end of Year 4 is similar to that expected in mathematics for this year's cohort, but this represents good progress from their individual starting points, which were generally lower than usual for the school.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs make good progress. The very few pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals make good progress in all areas, including English and mathematics, and there are no gaps in the attainment of these pupils compared to other groups in the school. This reflects the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. Additional funding provided through the pupil premium is used to provide additional support by teaching assistants, and that any relative underachievement is addressed well.
- Progress in reading is good throughout the school. This was evident from the pupils' reading journals, listening to Key Stage 1 pupils read and by observing a guided reading session.
- The pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their education. They have good literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Currently, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise their calculation skills in problem-solving activities that make them think hard.
- During the inspection, Years 1 and 2 pupils were observed making excellent progress when they confidently read out loud the stories they had written to others and then explained what they had done well and what they could have done be better.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding. Teachers are very knowledgeable, enthusiastic and skilled at providing work that is suitable for their mixed-age and mixed-ability classes.
- The responses to Parent View revealed that parents agree that their children are taught well.
- Some teaching is innovative and results in pupils making outstanding progress. For example, Years 1 and 2 pupils were guided to come up with their own criteria for success, based on previous areas that required improvement, when designing their own project. This lesson also promoted the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well as they reflected on what each other had done well and what could be improved.
- Teaching assistants help pupils who have specific needs to understand their work well. They do not do things for them but, through careful questioning, encourage them to try by themselves. This was illustrated well in a Years 3 and 4 mathematics lesson, where pupils made good progress. Here they were given clues to help them to work out what shape was hidden in a bag.
- Occasionally, teachers do not make it clear to pupils how they can tell if they are being successful in their learning. When this happens, learning is not maximised and the progress pupils make slows.
- Marking in books is good and there are many helpful comments to help pupils improve their work. There were instances of pupils responding well to those comments, especially in the pupils' literacy books.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils behave exceptionally well and enjoy school enormously. They are extremely polite and courteous. This was very evident throughout the inspection. Pupils held doors open and were very keen to involve the inspectors appropriately in conversation.
- There is much evidence from staff, parents and the pupils themselves that behaviour has been outstanding for some time now. Pupils themselves rate behaviour as nine out of 10.
- Pupils say that they feel extremely safe at school. They understand well the different forms that bullying can take and say that, when occasionally people fall out, it is sorted out very quickly.
- Pupils look after each other extremely well. This was seen during lunchtime, with older pupils looking after younger children and encouraging them to eat all their lunch. When asked how they would describe their school, one pupil replied, 'it's just like being at home – like a family'.
- Pupils' outstanding behaviour has a highly positive impact on their learning. They are very keen to set themselves targets and they check how well they are learning against them, when given the opportunity to do so.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities, from milk monitor to worship monitor to stick insect monitor. Pupils are very proud of their 'willow walk' that they helped to design and of their role in taking care of the environment. They also love growing their own vegetables and herbs to use in their cooking activities.
- Attendance of all groups of pupils is consistently above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and staff work as an effective team. They have improved many aspects of the school since the previous inspection, including aspects of pupils' achievement, the quality of marking and of behaviour.
- The staff questionnaires indicated that all are very proud to work in the school and that there is unanimous support for the work that is being done.
- Leaders know the school's strengths and areas to develop further. Checks made on the quality of teaching are bringing about improvements. The impact of these checks is stronger in reading and writing than it is in mathematics.
- The progress that pupils make is checked regularly. Any pupil found to be falling behind is helped to catch up quickly. There is very little difference between the progress of different groups of pupils. This means that pupils all have an equality of opportunity to do well and there is no discrimination.
- The curriculum helps all pupils to learn well by making learning relevant to their interests, such as the weekly independent learning day. This has had a big impact on raising achievement in writing, in particular.
- Learning is enhanced well by a wide array of clubs, visits and visitors, many of which provide opportunities to develop the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils were observed thoroughly enjoying the singing assembly and their artwork displayed around the school is of a very high quality. Pupils told the inspectors that they gained much from their residential visit to Ford Castle because it helped their team-building skills.
- The school's safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority gives the school a light-touch support and has been involved in some effective governor training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors work very closely with the school and are frequent visitors. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching. They are being trained and their understanding of data relating to pupils' progress is increasing. Governors are fully involved with the allocation of the school's budget, including the pupil premium funding and teachers' pay linked to their performance. They hold the school to account well in many areas, but not rigorously enough at present with respect to the pupils' academic achievement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122300
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	412688

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Van Den Berg
Headteacher	Amanda Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2010
Telephone number	01434 230247
Fax number	01434 230247
Email address	admin@wark.northumberland.sch.uk

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