

Whittingham Church of England First School

Whittingham, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 4UP

Inspection dates 5 March 2014

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.

- The ambitious vision and inspirational leadership of the headteacher motivate staff and pupils to constantly give their best.
- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery because their learning is so well organised. They quickly become confident learners who work hard to find out things for themselves.
- All pupils make good progress regardless of their starting points, because they are eager to learn and want to please their teachers. They consistently reach standards at or above those expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work at a high level to meet the needs of each child. They manage the different learning needs of pupils in mixed-age classes very well, by constantly checking on how well each one is learning, so they know precisely when they are ready to move on.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils show consideration and respect for each other from the earliest age by following the excellent example set by all adults. They work hard in lessons because learning is fun.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. Excellent pastoral care creates a warm, safe environment where excellent relationships and good learning flourish.
- The outstanding curriculum abounds in exciting, memorable learning opportunities. Pupils acquire a vast range of knowledge and skills, as one pupil put it, 'about everything that interests you'. It ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Good leadership and management of teaching, and good governance, ensure that high standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and that the school is improving quickly towards its goal of being outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching does not yet bring about outstanding achievement for all pupils.
- Results in the phonics screening tests (letters and the sounds they make) are not as good as they might be for some groups of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons or parts of lessons. It was not possible to share these with the headteacher because of her teaching commitment.
- Discussions were held with the Chair and other members of the Governing Body, the headteacher, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including that relating to the school's safeguarding procedures, assessment information and the school's development plan.
- Inspectors undertook an examination of pupils' work on display and in their exercise books, and listened to pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 read.
- Inspectors took account of 19 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View); they also took account of six questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anne Humble

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than similar schools of its type.
- There is a below average proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium. The pupil premium provides additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families, and those children looked after by the local authority.
- The small numbers of pupils in each cohort mean that the proportion of pupils supported at school action varies year on year, but is generally close to or slightly above average.
- The same is true of the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- All pupils are of White British heritage, and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The government's floor standards do not apply to this school because pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4.
- The school has seen significant staffing changes since the previous inspection. A new headteacher took up post in 2011, and during 2013 two new teachers joined the staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding, thereby improving the achievement of pupils further by:
 - sharing the most effective teaching with staff to help all improve their own practice to that of the very best
 - embedding the recently introduced pupil mentoring programme so that its full effects are used to accelerate pupils' progress
- Extend the new programme for teaching knowledge about letters and sounds to all classes so that all pupils make faster progress in their acquisition of reading and writing skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter Nursery with skills that are generally at the expected level for their age. Excellent care and good routines help them to settle quickly and learn alongside their friends in the Reception group. Children quickly learn to share and develop the confidence and independence to learn for themselves. By the end of Reception, all have achieved a good level of development and are very well prepared for Year 1 with good literacy and numeracy skills and excellent social skills. They are confident learners with enquiring minds.
- Good progress continues as pupils move through the school. By the end of Year 2 pupils have made good progress, so they reach at least the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, and often exceed this. While most pupils achieve the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1, leaders are aware of the need to accelerate the learning of a few pupils with special educational needs and some boys.
- In Years 3 and 4 pupils' progress accelerates to outstanding on occasions, especially in mathematics. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of learning, having reached or exceeded the expectation for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The vast majority of pupils read fluently and with good understanding. Those who do not receive additional support to help them catch up with their classmates. The school has recently introduced a specific programme to teach these pupils about letters and the sounds they make (phonics) which is successfully accelerating the learning of these pupils. Plans are now in place to extend this programme into Reception and Year 1 and 2 classes.
- The most-able pupils are challenged well in all aspects of their learning. They are given responsibility for extending their knowledge and skills and in some cases move classes to work at a higher level than their class mates.
- Teachers and teaching assistants give well planned support that appropriately challenges pupils who have special educational needs, or have English as an additional language. This helps these pupils to do their best and succeed as well as other pupils.
- Pupil premium funds are used well to ensure that the achievement of pupils who are eligible for free school meals matches that of other pupils. The small numbers of pupils currently in Year 1 and Year 3 who are in receipt of the pupil premium are achieving either at or above the level expected for their age.

The quality of teaching is good

- High quality learning begins with teachers' accurate knowledge of their pupils' needs, and the skilful way this is used to challenge each individual to make the best progress they can in a lesson. For example Years 3 /4 pupils were very well challenged when learning about digital and analogue time, because the teacher set tasks to match their abilities and her expectations of what they could achieve were high. Good interventions were used throughout to support pupils when needed to ensure that they achieved their targets. The learning of the most-able pupils was extended by the teacher offering higher levels of challenge as the lesson proceeded. By the end, all pupils had made excellent progress and were very pleased with how well they had done.
- Teachers prepare pupils well for their independent tasks, so that they are confident they will succeed. This ensures that time is used well as pupils are able to make a prompt start. Pupils in Years 1/2 were able to write good descriptions of their 'wild thing' because the teacher had invited them to make suggestions for 'her' writing. This produced some good adjectives that pupils were able to discuss, and consider whether they were just right. They had plenty of ideas and new words for their own writing, so all were able to complete their tasks and feel that they had pleased their teacher with their efforts.
- Teachers consistently mark pupils' books well; they give good advice to pupils on how to improve. This effective system is currently being developed to accelerate pupils' progress

further. Pupils now have regular one-to-one discussions with their class teacher to discuss their work and progress. These discussions celebrate where pupils are doing well and give praise and rewards to encourage them to do even better. Pupils are delighted with these meetings and with the targets that their teachers set for more rapid improvement, some of which is already evident in many books.

- Teachers have an excellent understanding of how young children learn through their curiosity about the world around them. They provide frequent opportunities for children to observe and investigate the wonders of nature, in and outdoors. Children in the Nursery and Reception class were delighted see newly hatched chicks in the incubator in the school hall. They had been well prepared with a good range of new vocabulary, such as 'brooder box' and 'incubator' so were able to ask important questions of the teacher and each other to extend their understanding of what they saw. The teacher's careful demonstration of how to handle the chicks was followed exceptionally well by the children who were in awe of such young life and were very gentle with the 'little creatures'.
- Small-group teaching is very effective in boosting pupils' learning, because teaching assistants are well skilled in their questioning and prompts to help pupils to achieve well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils behave exceptionally well in and out of classrooms, and they encourage each other to conduct themselves well. In the school dining hall behaviour is calm and considerate and pupils of all ages contribute to the exceptionally smooth running of lunchtime arrangements by clearing up, taking turns and giving way to each other as a matter of course.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They consistently show great enthusiasm for their learning, because they say there is much that is 'exciting and fun' to do in lessons. They are expected to keep going and make their best efforts during lessons which develop good resilience and persistence in pupils of all ages. They are determined to succeed, so they do.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. Pupils are taught very effectively to identify potential risks to their well-being, such as those associated with roads, waterways and the use of the Internet, by teachers and visiting specialists such as the police and fire brigade. Pupils are very clear about how to use computers safely and read the rules on safety which are posted alongside computers. They know how to keep safe 'if you get lost in a shop'.
- Pupils have been taught well to recognise different types of bullying, including prejudiced-based bullying and cyber-bullying. They are certain that bullying is rare and that everyone knows to tell an adult if something unkind is happening. They are equally confident that staff will deal with bullying promptly and that it won't be repeated.
- Attendance is above average.
- Parents overwhelmingly agree that behaviour is good, and that their children are safe and happy in school.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership roles are well distributed in this small school and the three teaching staff each discharges a number of these roles. Since the formation of the new leadership team, there have been significant improvements to the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. She challenges and supports staff to give of their best constantly.
- Regular monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress gives the school an accurate picture of what is going well and what needs further improvement. Teamwork is excellent and this is driving forward improvement at a very good rate.
- The management of teachers' performance is robust. It is effective in sharing good practice and

training staff to support the school's priorities, although the timescale since the formation of the new teaching team means there is still more to do. There is a clear link between teachers' performance and their salary progression.

- Very effective systems to monitor pupils' learning ensure that any slowing in progress is picked up quickly and remedial action is taken. The introduction of the new tracking and support system to check on pupils' progress is having a noticeable impact on raising standards for all pupils. As a result, the school is set to implement a new programme for phonics teaching to improve the rate at which some pupils acquire good reading skills.
- The outstanding curriculum is planned to foster pupils' interests and talents and develop a lifelong love of learning. It is structured well to give pupils frequent opportunities to consolidate literacy and numeracy skills and prepare them well for the future with good social skills and enquiring minds.
- The school has used new primary sport funding effectively to improve the quality and breadth of sport provision. Swimming lessons and after-school sporting activities have been extended and pupil participation in clubs has increased.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is fully involved in driving improvements. Governors regularly take part in training to maintain their effectiveness, for example, in holding it to account for pupils' achievement by analysing tracking data and work in pupils' books. They ensure that safeguarding meets requirements so that pupils are safe and secure in school. They hold the school to account for the way funding for pupils supported by the pupil premium is used to raise their achievement. They have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching, and they hold teachers to account for pupils' achievement, only rewarding those who meet their targets fully.

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	122279
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	431359

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Rutherford
Headteacher	Belinda Athey
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2009
Telephone number	01665 574222
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