

# Whitfield Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Whitfield, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 8JH

## Inspection dates

26 February 2014

|                                |                      |                      |          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Good                 | 2        |
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Inadequate</b>    | <b>4</b> |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Inadequate           | 4        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Inadequate           | 4        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Requires improvement | 3        |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Inadequate           | 4        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Since the last inspection, the school has declined considerably. Achievement has fallen and, teaching has deteriorated significantly.
- All groups of pupils in all key stages underachieve in reading, writing and in mathematics. This means that the standards they reach by the end of Year 4, given their starting points, are too low.
- The quality of teaching is inadequate. Arrangements to assess pupils' abilities and to track their progress are weak and so learning is not planned well enough to build on what pupils already know and can do.
- The work that pupils are set does not provide enough challenge to ensure pupils make good progress, particularly in their literacy and numeracy skills which are underdeveloped.
- Marking does not give pupils the guidance they need to improve their work.
- Time in lessons is not always used to good enough effect to promote good progress. The quality of support from teaching assistants in helping pupils to learn is too variable.
- Teaching does not always motivate or fully engage pupils. Some pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour require improvement.
- Arrangements to manage the performance of staff fail to ensure that they are held to account for pupils' progress.
- Leaders' actions to improve teaching and pupils' achievement are ineffective. Staff do not receive clear enough guidance and support on how to improve their teaching practices.
- Leaders, including governors, do not have a good enough understanding of the school's overall performance or how well pupils, including those of different groups, are doing.

### The school has the following strengths

- Relationships between adults and pupils are good. Pupils are cared for well by committed staff and say they feel safe. They are proud of their school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Parents' value the school's Christian ethos.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was conducted in one day by two inspectors and was monitored by a member of Her Majesty's Inspectorate.
- Pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 were off-site visiting a museum in Newcastle for the duration of the inspection. Children in the Nursery were not present as they attend on a part-time basis.
- Inspectors observed learning and teaching in two sessions and reviewed the work in pupils' books, spoke to children and listened to some read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, and four members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. Other meetings were held with members of staff and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including risk assessments and accident records and children's learning journals in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They also looked at the school's data relating to pupils' progress, school records of the quality of teaching, minutes from meetings of the governing body, the school's views of its own effectiveness and its improvement plans.
- Inspectors considered 13 responses to the online survey (Parent View). Inspectors spoke informally to a number of parents and considered a letter from a parent.
- The inspectors considered responses to inspection questionnaires completed by eight staff.

## Inspection team

|                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Kevin Dodd, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Benjamin Harding           | Additional Inspector |

## Full report

*In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

### Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average sized primary school.
- The school converted from a first school to a primary school in September 2013 and now has pupils in Year 5.
- The school admits Nursery aged children on a part-time basis.
- There are no pupils supported at school action. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is very low. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- There are two classes: one for pupils in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and 2 who are taught by the headteacher and the other class for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5. A specialist teacher in religious education teaches pupils on Tuesday afternoons.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
  - eradicating any inadequate teaching
  - ensuring that the development of children's skills, knowledge and understanding are assessed and recorded accurately when they start the school and their progress is carefully tracked so that their next steps of learning build well upon what they already know and can do
  - making sure teachers plan activities which provide challenge for all groups of pupils, including those of varying ages and abilities
  - providing opportunities for the teachers to share and learn from the very best teaching practices in other schools
  - ensuring that the role of teaching assistants in lessons is always clear and that their skills are developed so they can help pupils to learn effectively
  - making sure teachers make the best use of time in lessons to promote learning
  - ensuring teachers provide regular feedback to pupils in lessons and through marking and that pupils are able to respond in a way that promotes their learning
  - ensuring teachers provide pupils with more challenging and exciting work that maintains their interest so that pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are always good.
- Ensure that pupils make at least good progress in reading, writing and in mathematics, so that they reach above average levels of attainment by the time they leave the school by:
  - improving pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they make and older pupils' skills in

understanding what they have read

- making sure pupils' number skills are developed progressively
- providing greater opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in extended pieces of writing
- ensuring handwriting is taught regularly and pupils are encouraged to write and present their work neatly.

■ Urgently improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management by:

- ensuring that teaching and learning are checked more rigorously and that feedback to staff about how to improve their teaching and pupils' learning is clear and acted upon
- establishing links with successful schools in the area in order to improve the skills of leaders to drive improvement
- improving the tracking of pupils' progress so that the achievement of different groups of pupils can be identified more swiftly and the necessary support put in place to prevent them from falling behind
- making sure that leaders and governors fully understand what progress pupils are capable of and what constitutes good progress for pupils given their individual starting points
- improving the governing body's knowledge of the school's work, its strengths and weaknesses so that they can hold leaders to account for their performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- From their varying, but broadly typical starting points, all groups of pupils in all key stages underachieve in reading, writing and in mathematics. This is because of inadequate teaching over time and because of significant weaknesses in the school's systems for checking how well they are doing.
- Teachers' assessment of the levels of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 fluctuate widely from year to year, which often reflects the small numbers of pupils in each year group. In 2013, attainment in Year 2 was significantly below average overall in reading, writing and mathematics. A below average proportion of pupils reached the nationally expected Level 2 across these subjects and no pupils reached the higher Level 3. This represents inadequate progress, including for the most able pupils, from their typically broadly average starting points.
- Although there is no nationally published data to compare the attainment or progress of pupils at the end of Year 4, school data shows that, in relation to the expected level of attainment for nine year olds, pupils in Year 4 in 2013 were working below the expected levels for their age. This contrasts markedly to the above average standards reported at the last inspection. Inspection evidence shows that pupils currently in Key Stage 2 are making inadequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics as a result of inadequate teaching.
- Pupils' progress in reading is inadequate. There is too little focus on developing pupils' knowledge of how letters are linked to sounds and, as a result, they struggle to read unfamiliar words. Only a minority of pupils reach the expected standard in the check on pupils' early reading skills at the end of Year 1. Currently in Year 2, pupils are making better progress and so this gap is closing, with more pupils working at levels typically expected for their age in Year 2. Although children enjoy reading and reading records show they read often in school and at home, progress in reading across the school remains too variable. Pupils' writing books for example, show that there are not enough opportunities for older children to develop their understanding of the texts they have read.
- Leaders acknowledge the inspectors' findings that pupils' writing and mathematics skills are weak. This is because teaching fails to build well upon what pupils already know and can do. The presentation and quality of pupils' work is variable. Work is often incomplete, untidy or much shorter than would be expected given their various abilities, particularly for the most able pupils. For some pupils, their handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar skills are weak because they are given too few opportunities to practise them.
- School leaders do not know how well pupils, and different groups of pupils, are doing. They fail to check carefully enough on the skills, knowledge and understanding children have when they join the Early Years Foundation Stage and so the school does not have a clear enough starting point upon which to measure the progress they have made by the time they leave. Systems to track pupils' progress through the school are underdeveloped. Data on pupils' progress is neither gathered consistently nor used effectively. This prevents teachers from planning and providing work that reflects the next steps required for pupils to make progress in their learning.
- Information collected on the progress of different groups of pupils, including the most able, the very few pupils supported by pupil premium and those with special educational needs is not analysed. Inspection evidence indicates the progress for these groups is too variable and their achievement is inadequate. Work is not matched well enough to help them make enough progress. Their varying needs are not planned for adequately. The school's efforts to promote equality of opportunity are, therefore, ineffective.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Teaching over time is inadequate. Pupils' achievements are not recorded precisely enough to identify the needs of particular groups of pupils. Teachers' planning of activities does not ensure

pupils' next steps in learning are clear and as a result teaching fails to ensure learning is challenging enough and meets pupils' varying needs. For example, a group of Reception-aged children were required to undertake an activity to match shapes to their outlines. Most children were already able to name shapes and identify their properties confidently and as a result, found the activity too easy and it failed to deepen their understanding of mathematics.

- Staff do not keep accurate or detailed enough records of children's progress and this leads to an inaccurate view of how well children are learning. Evidence of children's achievements in 'learning journals' for example, too often are not dated and lack the necessary commentary to indicate what they have learned or the progress made.
- Support provided by teaching assistants is too variable. They are not used to good effect during all parts of lessons. For example, when teachers are explaining work to the class, opportunities to support and encourage pupils' learning are overlooked. Teachers fail to plan their support well enough to ensure they target the right pupils at the right time and to ensure they are clear enough how to best support learning.
- Teachers do not always make the best use of the time available in lessons to promote learning. This means that on these occasions pupils' learning is not pushed on fast enough and as a result, pupils become restless and unsettled and some engage in low-level disruption. Teachers' expectations of good behaviour are not always high enough to prevent this low-level disruption.
- Given that pupils underachieve, sufficient priority is not given to the teaching of basic skills. Coupled with this the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills is weak. Pupils are given too few opportunities to practise their skills throughout the school day and across the subjects. In mathematics, work on number is not built on progressively and skills are not applied consistently to ensure pupils learn well. In writing, skills taught are not practised effectively across different subjects.
- The marking of work is too variable across the school, particularly in writing. Little guidance is given to pupils on how to improve their work. Teachers mainly use ticks and positive comments but do not make it clear enough through suggestions or advice how pupils can improve their work.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

## **requires improvement**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because attitudes to learning are not always good, especially when work is not set at the right levels, lacks challenge or fails to maintain their interest. Although most pupils behave well in lessons and are quick to respond to teachers' instructions, there are instances of low-level disruption by a small minority. Pupils do not always settle down quickly to their tasks and this means that valuable learning time is lost.
- Behaviour around the school is usually good. Pupils play well together at break and lunchtimes. Pupils and parents report that behaviour is usually good.
- Staff take a genuine interest in their pupils. This is helped by the supportive relationships between them. Pupils respond well to this caring and consistent approach.
- Pupils take pride in their school and the majority support wearing the school uniform and help to keep classrooms tidy. They are keen to talk about developments linked to the Eco-School's award scheme, such as the wind powered turbine.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of bullying is good. They know what it means and the different forms that it may take, including through the internet.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare. They are confident in reporting bullying or any other concerns. Pupils say they feel safe because of the good and caring relationships with staff and with one another. Parents express no concerns about bullying. However, the school's procedures to record any incidents of bullying are yet to be formalised.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.
- Attendance rates can vary widely due to the small numbers of pupils in the school. However, most pupils attend regularly and arrive to school on time.

## **The leadership and management are inadequate**

- The drive for improvement rests too heavily on the shoulders of the headteacher. She has not received effective support, for example, from the governing body, the local authority or from partnerships with other schools. As a result, the school has not been able to make the necessary improvements. Since the last inspection, actions to improve the school have been ineffective and the school's effectiveness has declined, with too many pupils now underachieving. The school's ability to improve is weak.
- The leadership of teaching is inadequate and the quality of teaching has deteriorated significantly. Arrangements for checking on the quality of teaching and teachers' performance targets are not focused sharply enough on pupils' learning and progress. Feedback given to teachers, resulting from observations of their teaching, does not make it clear enough how they need to improve their teaching and pupils' learning. Therefore, this does not lead to better classroom practise. Similarly, teachers have received few opportunities to share and learn from the good and better teaching practices in other schools.
- The movement of teachers up the pay scale is not effectively linked to the quality of their teaching. . Not enough is being done to hold staff to account for the progress of pupils or to ensure that the quality of teaching improves.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The school's current systems to check on pupils' levels of attainment and to track their progress are weak. Leaders fail to check carefully enough how well pupils, including those from different groups, are performing. Furthermore, leaders and governors do not have a good enough understanding of how much progress pupils are expected to make in order for them to achieve well. Consequently, leaders do not have a clear enough view of the school's overall effectiveness and their view of this is far too generous.
- The local authority has provided little support since the last inspection. It has not recognised or intervened effectively enough to prevent the decline in standards and in the quality of teaching and learning. Partnerships with other schools to improve leadership and management are underdeveloped.
- There are a number of off-site trips which are enjoyed by pupils. Activities planned around topics such as dinosaurs and Ancient Egypt, appeal to pupils' interests but there are not enough opportunities to promote the development of pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, pupils are not prepared well enough for their next stage of education. Celebrations of festivals, such as Christmas and the study of varying religions such as Islam, support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the new primary school sport funding is used to good effect. Pupils now receive specialist support in physical education to ensure that they are fit and healthy. The school has a variety of activities on offer, mostly after school, which are well attended and help pupils develop a range of skills in areas ranging from cricket to gymnastics and dance. Pupils are encouraged to join local clubs to encourage their involvement in sport beyond that provided by the school.
- The school is well regarded by parents who value the Christian, welcoming and caring ethos provided by the staff. Staff work hard and are committed to providing a good education for the pupils in their care, but the burden of their responsibilities due to the lack of effective support from governors and outside the school has prevented them from achieving their ambition.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is ineffective. Governors have a weak understanding of pupils' achievement both in the past and currently because they rely too heavily on information provided by the headteacher at the expense of making checks for themselves. They have not challenged senior leaders with enough rigour to bring about improvement and are not yet clear enough how to measure the school's effectiveness. For example, they do not know enough about what difference the pupil premium is making to eligible pupils' achievement.
  - Governors are too slow to deal with weaknesses in teaching, they have not acted quickly enough to strengthen partnerships with local schools to support improvements in teaching and

prevent the decline in pupils' achievement.

- Governors ensure that the statutory safeguarding requirements are met. They have detailed knowledge about the use and impact of the new primary school sports funding. They know that it is helping to raise pupils' enjoyment of, and participation in, sports and to promote their physical well-being.

## 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

|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 122303         |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Northumberland |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 433273         |

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

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary aided  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 40   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Steve Agar   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Elizabeth Baker  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 6 December 2010  |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01434 345267   |
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