

Inspection of Whalton Church of England Aided Primary School

Whalton, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 3XH

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils take pride in the small and caring school they attend. Walton Church of England Aided Primary School has six core values, including hope and honesty, that are part of every school day. Pupils celebrate this and talk enthusiastically about their time at school.

Leaders have developed a curriculum where everyone can achieve, especially in reading and mathematics. These core subjects are well planned. Leaders at all levels have high ambitions for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils are eager to talk with visitors. They move around school in an orderly manner and show respect for each other across the classes. Pupils say they are well cared for by the adults in school and by other pupils. Bullying is rare and not tolerated. Pupils say that staff take behaviour very seriously. Consequences are clear. Pupils feel safe at school. Across the school, pupils have a range of opportunities to develop leadership skills. These include being a class librarian or playground equipment monitor. Pupils know these roles are important to the school.

Leaders and governors know the challenges they face as a small school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

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

School leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum for all subjects. Quality training has helped subject leaders to revise and create curriculum plans that support the mixed-age classes in this school well. Teachers have a range of resources to support them to understand how skills and knowledge build over time. These plans and resources are having the most impact in the teaching of reading and mathematics.

Leaders have made reading a high priority in this school. Leaders know that being able to read is important for pupils to succeed in all aspects of school life. Pupils in early years make a quick start to learning phonics. Early readers take part in well-structured phonics sessions. Books for those at the early stages of reading are well matched to the sounds they are learning. Pupils say they enjoy reading at school. They enjoy class novels and the different topics they cover. Teaching in mathematics is planned, so that pupils revise previous learning well. Pupils are confident about their mathematics work. They recognise their achievements. Opportunities for learning about shape and number for the youngest pupils are well planned. Pupils in early years learn through a range of well-planned activities to think about mathematics.

In the wider curriculum, in subjects including history and design and technology, subject leaders are passionate about and have a good understanding of their

subjects. In lessons, however, the aims of the curriculum are not always clearly taught.

Assessment in reading and mathematics is ongoing in lessons. It is used effectively. Teachers ask quality questions to make checks on what pupils understand. Assessment at the end of teaching units supports teachers' future planning. Leaders have started this in science teaching with success. They recognise that there is more work to do to make assessment purposeful in the wider curriculum.

Pupils with SEND benefit from an experienced leader. The support pupils with SEND receive is carefully planned to meet their needs. The support demonstrates leaders' high ambition. Parents speak positively about how the school works with pupils with SEND. Referrals to specialist agencies are timely. Experts help staff to understand how pupils with SEND can be supported effectively.

School routines and behaviour expectations are clear and well established for all pupils, including the youngest. As pupils move through school, systems to support them to make good choices continue. Behaviour is positive. Relationships between staff and pupils are kind and friendly. Pupils get on well together. In small groups, pupils talk to each other with increasing respect. They are not afraid to challenge each other's thinking. The youngest pupils show high levels of motivation and focus, when taking part in the range of activities on offer in their classroom. Pupils enjoy the family environment the small school creates during lunchtime. Outside, pupils challenge each other with physical activities, like skipping.

Pupils enjoy working with the other school in the federation. Pupils are developing their understanding of modern Britain through this joint work. Alongside this, the personal, social and health education curriculum helps pupils understand healthy relationships and different families. Democracy and other British values are in action during the school day. School council representatives and the eco-council help develop character. School visits excite pupils. Residential trips and visiting Dance City in Newcastle broaden pupils' experiences.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL), staff and governors receive timely and appropriate safeguarding training. This means they understand and recognise the risks of harm pupils might face. There are clear procedures to secure the support of external agencies when pupils may be at risk of harm. The DSL works with external partners when needed. The DSL, staff and governors understand issues that can impact the local community linked to safeguarding.

Pupils feel safe in school. Pupils say they have trusted adults who help them. Leaders and governors recruit staff using appropriate guidelines.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, such as history and design and technology, the sequencing of content in lessons is not clear. As a result, pupils cannot make links between some content and are not building their knowledge and skills effectively. Leaders should support teachers to ensure their lessons match the intent of the curriculum, so that pupils can link and build their knowledge.
- Teachers' use of assessment in some subjects is not checking what pupils can do and remember well enough. Leaders do not have a secure understanding of the impact of the curriculum in these subjects. Leaders must refine methods to assess pupils in some foundation subjects in order to ensure that the delivery of the curriculum is effective.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	122302
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10199290
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Truscott
Executive Headteacher	Nichola Brannen
Website	http://www.whalton.northumberland.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	28 September 2006

Information about this school

- Whalton Church of England Aided Primary School is a voluntary-aided school. It is part of the Diocese of Newcastle.
- The school is a much smaller than average primary school.
- The school is part of a federation with Longhorsley St Helen's Church of England Primary School, which is about 12 miles away.
- The schools share the same executive headteacher and subject leaders work across both schools.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school's most recent section 48 took place in March 2018, the school was graded outstanding. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history and design and technology. The lead inspector also looked at work in science. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers. They spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils at the early stages of reading with a familiar adult. Provision for pupils with SEND was observed with leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classes, at breaktime and at lunchtime.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke with the school improvement partner for the school from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to staff and governors. Safeguarding documentation was scrutinised, including the safeguarding policies, and the single central record. Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed relationships between pupils and adults. The lead inspector also met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors gathered views of parents informally in person and formally through responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. The views of staff and pupils were considered through surveys and meetings.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Baines

Ofsted Inspector

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