

Inspection of Whittonstall First School

Whittonstall, Consett, County Durham DH8 9JN

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 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?

Leaders have created a warm and welcoming ethos at Whittonstall First School. The whole school community is at the centre of the school's vision. Pupils enjoy coming to school every day. They are proud of their work and the friendships they make.

Leaders have high expectations and ambitions for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The newly implemented curriculum is helping leaders to achieve these.

Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is rare. Pupils recognise how the adults in school help them to keep safe. In lessons, behaviour is positive. Pupils know and understand how good behaviour helps them learn in lessons. Pupils value opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities. They like the 'buddy' system which links older and younger pupils at breaktimes to build friendships.

Parents and carers value the work of the school. One parent, echoing the views of many said, 'Whittonstall First School is such a nurturing, inclusive environment where each child is supported to achieve their full potential.'

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

Whittonstall First School has undergone recent and rapid change. It has a new senior leadership structure. Senior leaders have implemented new curriculums for reading, history, geography, and art and design from the trust.

Leaders, governors and staff are very proud of their school and its achievements. Successful curriculum development is evident in the reading, mathematics and history curriculums. Leaders have prioritised training for staff in these subjects. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and teach these subjects well. The sequences of learning are effective. As a result, pupils build knowledge in these lessons effectively. Ongoing assessment in history and mathematics helps teachers know what pupils are learning and remembering. Leaders have carefully thought about the mixed-age classes in school and how to structure the curriculum. Where the curriculum is less robust, such as in physical education (PE), the sequence of teaching is not planned clearly.

Pupils make a positive start to reading at Whittonstall First School. There is clear consideration given to the books that pupils read and study across the curriculum. Leaders have quickly embedded their new phonics scheme. Quality training in reading enables staff to deliver the scheme effectively. Teachers ensure that pupils benefit from whole-class phonics teaching. Any gaps in understanding are picked up promptly by staff. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about reading for pleasure. Pupil librarians are proud of their responsibility to promote reading to other pupils. Pupils at the earliest stages of reading are given books to read that are well matched to their phonics knowledge. This helps these pupils to read with confidence and

fluency. The love of reading seen with older pupils starts with engaging story times in the early years.

Whittonstall First School is a school where everyone is welcome. Pupils with SEND access all aspects of school life alongside their peers. Leaders put bespoke support in place for pupils with SEND. Processes for pupils with SEND are efficient and effective. Pupils with SEND benefit from an experienced special educational needs and disabilities coordinator who, when necessary, accesses guidance and support from specialist agencies and professionals.

Relationships between staff and children in the early years are kind and friendly. Routines are clear and established quickly. These routines continue as pupils move through the school. Most pupils speak to each other in a respectful way and celebrate the differences that they have. Occasionally, pupils make poor choices. A new behaviour policy is helping staff in school to support pupils to reflect on their behaviour. Pupils know that adults in school listen to them. All have a trusted adult they can talk to.

Leaders celebrate the range of opportunities and experiences that the school offers. Each class enjoys and benefits from the on-site forest school provision. Forest school activities support the early years curriculum effectively. Opportunities to enrich the curriculum with educational visits are planned for over the school year. The wider personal, social and health education curriculum ensures that unique issues relating to living in a rural community are taught. Focus weeks have a spotlight on national events, such as 'Anti-Bullying Week'. Pupils understand that everyone is different and must be treated fairly. Pupils participate in democracy in school. They vote for the school council. Children in Reception vote daily to choose their story time book.

Staff benefit from sharing subject leadership. This model of working reduces the workload for teachers in this very small, rural school significantly.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has clear procedures in place to keep children safe. The DSL makes referrals to external services to support pupils and their families in a timely way. Staff and governors receive regular updates and training about safeguarding. Leaders and staff have developed a 'it could happen here' culture to safeguarding.

Pupils feel safe. They know how to keep safe online and within the school community. They learn this in an age-appropriate way.

Leaders ensure that adults working in the school are recruited using effective safeguarding procedures.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The sequences of learning in some foundation subjects are unclear. Pupils are not supported well to know and remember more in these foundation subjects. They cannot build on previous knowledge well. Senior and subject leaders need to match the rigour and sequencing in place for mathematics and history to other foundation subjects and ensure that staff are supported to deliver these subjects more effectively.

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	146949
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10227534
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of local governing body	Denise Kendall
Executive Headteacher	Kelly Howe
Website	www.whittonstall.eschools.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The executive headteacher is new to post.
- The school shares their executive leadership with Broomley First School.
- Subject leadership is shared across the two schools.
- The school is part of Tyne Community Learning Trust.
- Leaders run a breakfast club and an after-school club as part of a wraparound offer.
- The school uses an alternative provision, Toucan Education.

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 school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and PE. The lead inspector also looked at curriculum plans and pupils' work in history. 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.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive of the trust, one director and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classes, at breaktimes and in breakfast club.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to staff, parents 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 DSL.
- 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 meetings.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jill Bowe

Ofsted Inspector

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 and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022