

Inspection of a good school: White Mere Community Primary School

Sherburn Way, Wardley, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear NE10 8BA

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 October 2023

Outcome

White Mere Community Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils in this school are friendly, welcoming and inquisitive. They feel happy and safe. Leaders and staff develop very positive relationships in the school community. Leaders ensure that everyone across the school understands how to keep themselves and others safe. Parents and carers are complimentary about the school. One parent's comment reflected the views of many others: 'The school is a friendly, safe, welcoming place for children and it's a pleasure to be associated with the school as a parent.'

There is a positive culture of learning in this school. From their first days in school, children in early years show a willingness to focus on their learning. These positive attitudes towards learning continue through the rest of the school.

Leaders have established high expectations and aspirations for their school 'family'. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A clear, well-implemented behaviour policy focuses on positive affirmation. As a result, pupils' behaviour is excellent. Bullying is not an issue at this school. Pupils are proud of their school and are keen to showcase the range of opportunities they enjoy at White Mere.

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

Leaders place a high priority on children in early years developing firm foundations in communication, language and listening. This means that children are well equipped for formal phonics teaching in Reception. All staff have received training in the school's chosen phonics programme. They teach this programme with consistency and fidelity. As a result, more pupils are achieving the Year 1 phonics screening check over time. Pupils are prepared well to access the wider curriculum and are ready for their next stage of education. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons are exemplary. Attendance for all groups of pupils has improved as a result of the school's engagement with families.

All pupils, including those with SEND, are given every opportunity to meet the high expectations of the school. Staff cater well for the range of needs in the school. They use adapted resources and practical apparatus effectively when working with pupils. Pupils at risk of falling behind receive targeted support to help them keep up. Parents are very appreciative of the support that is put in place for pupils with SEND. One parent, echoing the views of many, said, 'My child's needs are recognised and support put into place to help her fulfil her full potential.'

Leaders have introduced a new and wider curriculum over the past 18 months. They have taken care to personalise this curriculum and plan for exciting links to the area's local heritage. One group of Year 2 pupils spoke with confidence and knowledge about the Great Fire of Gateshead, for example. They were able to articulate a secure understanding of their learning in line with the school's intentions. While the school's assessment procedures are well established in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, they are less secure in foundation subjects, such as history and geography. In some foundation subjects, gaps in pupils' learning are not quickly identified. Teaching in these subjects does not address areas of need consistently well.

Pupils at White Mere benefit from well-planned opportunities for their wider development. As part of a recent enterprise initiative, pupils visited a chocolate factory and then designed, made and sold hot chocolate. As part of this work, pupils wrote a letter to the chair of governors requesting funding. The money they raised was then used as part of the school fund for other, wider opportunities for pupils. These pupils feel very proud to have contributed to the life of the school. Pupils exhibit a strong sense of equality and fairness. One pupil said, 'We're all different, but all the same.' Diversity is actively celebrated. For example, the school took part in Pride Week celebrations. Leaders have established links with a local church to enhance pupils' spiritual development.

Senior leaders keep the governing board well informed. Governors have a clear understanding of the school. Governors offer effective strategic support and challenge. The school takes swift and effective action to identify and address areas for development. As a result, outcomes in writing at key stage 1 have seen a marked improvement. Improvements in the teaching of writing are not fully embedded in key stage 2. While there has been significant improvement in key stage 2 outcomes, the teaching of writing remains a priority.

Staff in school feel well supported by leaders. They believe that leaders consider their workload when planning new initiatives in school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' acquisition of knowledge in writing is inconsistent. Pupils in key stage 2 do not make the progress in writing of which they are capable. The school should ensure that the curriculum for writing is as effective in key stage 2 as it is in key stage 1.
- Assessment of pupils' progress in some foundation subjects is not consistent. This means that gaps in pupils' learning are not consistently identified in a timely fashion. The school should ensure that its plans for developing assessment in these subjects proceed at pace, so that teaching addresses pupils' areas of need more closely.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2014.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108362
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10289974
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Tait
Headteacher	John Archer
Website	www.whitemereprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	2 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been significant changes to staffing and to the senior leadership team since the previous inspection. The current acting headteacher was appointed in April 2023.
- The previous acting headteacher is now a co-opted governor.
- The number of pupils on roll at the time of this inspection was 135. The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, other school staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work, including writing.
- The inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; met with those responsible for safeguarding; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils, and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered the responses to the staff and pupil online surveys and Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Richard Beadnall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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