

Inspection of Bedlington Whitley Memorial Church of England Primary School

Gordon Terrace, Bedlington, Northumberland NE22 5DE

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attending this school become part of the 'Whitley family'. The school is at the heart of the community. Many of its parents attended as pupils. Everyone receives a warm welcome. Pupils who are new to the school settle quickly and make friends.

Children make a positive start to their education in the early years. They are quick to settle into routines. They play and learn happily together. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) play a full part in school life. Pupils enjoy learning to read and quickly become fluent readers. However, their learning in other subjects, such as mathematics, is less effective.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know when and how to report any concerns that they may have. If bullying happens, pupils are confident that staff will sort it out. Pupils behave well most of the time. On occasion, their behaviour outside the classroom is less orderly.

Pupils benefit from a range of clubs and opportunities that enable them to take on positions of responsibility. Those elected to the 'Whitley parliament' are proud of their role and their positive impact on school life. Some aspects of the personal development curriculum are not as strong. For example, the curriculum does not develop pupils' understanding of different world views and cultures well enough.

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

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the school has undergone significant change. It has changed from a first to a primary school. There have been considerable changes to staffing and leadership.

Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school. They have correctly identified the things that need to improve. The school is working closely with the local authority and the diocese to bring about these improvements. Early years and the teaching of reading have improved rapidly. These are now strengths of the school. Other improvements are at an earlier stage of development.

The school has introduced a broad, sequenced curriculum. This curriculum identifies key learning and vocabulary for each subject. However, much of the curriculum is new to staff. Weaknesses in the previous curriculum, exacerbated by the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, have resulted in gaps in pupils' knowledge. For example, in mathematics, older pupils struggle to solve problems involving fractions. This is because their prior knowledge of fractions is not secure. In subjects such as geography, pupils find more complex tasks difficult to complete due to similar gaps in their knowledge. The school has a plan to help staff adapt the new curriculum to address these gaps.

Improvements to the teaching of early reading have had more time to become embedded. There is a clear ambition to ensure that pupils become fluent readers as

early as possible. Children in the Nursery class enjoy a wide range of stories, songs and rhymes. They are ready to begin learning phonics in the Reception class. The school follows a sequenced phonics programme. Staff are well trained in its use. Pupils practise their phonics by reading books matched to the sounds they know. They hear lots of stories in their classes. Pupils who struggle to learn phonics receive extra sessions until they catch up. Most pupils become fluent readers by the time they leave key stage 1.

The school uses a range of methods that enable pupils with SEND to keep up with their peers. These include short interventions, visual prompts, adult support and specialist equipment. The school works effectively with parents and external agencies to help pupils who need specialist support.

The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils to develop personally and socially. Pupils develop a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe online and in the local area. Leaders have identified challenges for pupils that have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. More pupils struggle with their mental health and resilience. Fewer pupils have experience of the world outside their immediate community. However, the curriculum does not raise pupils' understanding of these areas well enough.

Standards of behaviour vary across the school. Most pupils understand and follow the school rules but staff expectations of behaviour are not consistent. There is not a shared vision of how good behaviour might be taught and encouraged. Opportunities to do this in breaktimes, lessons and other activities are often missed. The school's work to improve pupils' attendance has improved and is effective. The number of pupils who miss school regularly is reducing.

Children are quick to settle into the early years. Staff develop strong relationships with parents. They understand children's needs. The curriculum is well designed. Children learn through a wide range of activities that build their knowledge and experience. They learn routines and how to play together. Staff are skilled at encouraging children to talk, socialise and build their vocabulary. Children are well prepared socially and academically when they start in key stage 1.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In subjects such as mathematics and geography, pupils sometimes lack the prior knowledge to successfully complete tasks. This means that they do not learn as well as they should. The school should further enhance training on the new

curriculum so that teachers adjust teaching more effectively to address previous gaps in pupils' learning.

- With the exception of the early years, the school does not provide pupils with clear guidance on how to behave. This contributes to variable standards of behaviour, particularly outside the classroom. The school should work with staff to set clear expectations for behaviour, and support pupils to meet these expectations.
- The personal development curriculum does not develop pupils' awareness of different cultures and world views well enough. In addition, pupils do not learn about important issues, such as how to keep mentally healthy, in enough depth. The school should take further action to enhance pupils' personal development so that they have a better understanding in these areas.

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	122281
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10290112
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	272
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Chris Peart
Headteacher	Claire Gray
Website	www.whitley.northumberland.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school became a primary school in 2020. Prior to that, and at the time of the previous inspection, it was a first school.
- The headteacher was appointed in March 2021.
- The school offers a breakfast club and hosts a registered after-school provision on site.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Newcastle. The last inspection of its religious character (section 48 inspection) was in June 2018. The school's next section 48 inspection is due within eight years of its previous section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and with governors. The lead inspector also held conversations with representatives of Northumberland local authority and the Diocese of Newcastle.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders about provision for pupils with SEND and considered relevant documentation and practice.
- Inspectors spoke with teaching and support staff and considered responses to Ofsted’s staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with pupils throughout the inspection, both formally and informally, during breaktimes and in lessons.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, listened to pupils read, talked with pupils and looked at pupils’ work. Inspectors also spoke with pupils about their learning in other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the content of minutes of governing body meetings and other documentation, including reports from external partners.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, and spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors considered pupils’ behaviour in and outside lessons. Inspectors also considered school behaviour records and spoke with pupils about behaviour.

Inspection team

Ian Dawson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Ward	Ofsted Inspector
Kate Morris	Ofsted Inspector

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