

INSPECTION REPORT

**WHITLEY CHAPEL CHURCH OF ENGLAND
FIRST SCHOOL**

Hexham

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122293

Headteacher: Mrs M Dobby

Reporting inspector: Mr A Clark
21596

Dates of inspection: 28th – 29th November 2000

Inspection number: 225142

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First school
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Leazes Lane Steel Hexham Northumberland
Postcode:	NE47 0HB
Telephone number:	01434 673294
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. A Patterson
Date of previous inspection:	18 th November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Whitley Chapel Church of England First School is a very small rural school near Hexham. There are 33 boys and girls on roll between the ages of four and nine. A further nine children attend the nursery class in the mornings. The school is very much smaller than average. Approximately seven per cent of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs and three per cent of pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are no pupils from the ethnic minorities. The majority of the pupils live in the small villages and hamlets around the school. Children's achievement on entry to the school is typical for their age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a successful school. It is well led and provides a caring and stimulating education. Pupils make good progress and standards of work are high by the age of nine. The quality of teaching is good and relationships are very good. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards of writing are high.
- The pupils' knowledge of number and ability to calculate mentally are good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The caring ethos and very good links with the school community lead to good personal development.

What could be improved

- Older pupils' written calculations in mathematics.
- Guidance for pupils to improve their work.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. Since then the school has made good improvement overall and maintained the many strengths identified at the time. Standards have risen in English and mathematics. The quality of teaching has improved and is consistently good and sometimes very good. The effective policies for planning and management are now presented as written documents and are readily available to parents. The caring ethos and very good relationships with parents and the community remain a strength of the school.

STANDARDS

The very small size of the school means that there are substantial differences in the results of national tests year on year as few pupils are involved. It is inappropriate to publish the results as individual pupils may be identified.

By the time the pupils leave school at nine years old standards in English and mathematics are high for their age and progress is good through the school. Standards of writing are particularly high. Pupils' reading skills are good; they read with understanding, their research skills and the use of non-fiction are good. Speaking and listening skills are good and pupils develop a wide vocabulary in many subjects. Pupils' skills in the recall of number facts and the speed of response to mental calculations are very good, but pupils do not consistently produce written calculations to the same standard. There is no significant difference in the standards attained by boys or girls over time. The results of National Curriculum tests at the age of seven reflect these standards and have risen since the last inspection.

In the work seen, standards in science are good. Skills in information and communication technology are sound and pupils make good use of computers and tape recorders throughout the school. Pupils sing well and art and history project work shows good understanding.

Children make good progress through the nursery and reception class to the age of five. They become keen and enthusiastic learners. They reach and sometimes exceed standards typical for their age in language and literacy, mathematics, personal and social development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative

and physical development. Children make particularly good progress in the early stages of reading, writing and numeracy.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners. They are very happy at school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils are polite and very well behaved. They respond well to the teachers' high expectations and are trustworthy.
Personal development and relationships	This is very good. Pupils learn to respect each other in response to the care they are shown. They grow in confidence and are well prepared for the next stage of education.
Attendance	This is good. Pupils are punctual and settle quickly to work.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-9 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

In the lessons observed teaching was at least good. In 25 per cent of lessons it was very good. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught throughout the school and teachers take many opportunities to improve pupils' ability. The effective teaching ensures that learning is good; pupils concentrate for long periods and work well together and individually. Teachers' plan work very effectively to challenge pupils of all abilities including the more able and those with special educational needs. Teachers make helpful comments to pupils as they work. However, written marking does not always make it clear to older pupils how they can improve their work. Teachers ask good questions to test all pupils and make them think. Teaching methods are imaginative and meaningful to the pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is good. The work is meaningful to the pupils and constructive links are made between subjects. The curriculum for children under five is effective in meeting their needs. The curriculum meets statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school works closely with other agencies to achieve the best provision for pupils. Learning targets are planned in small, appropriate steps and pupils make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. The school is very caring and staff and other adults are good role models for pupils' social and moral development. Pupils are given responsibility. Spiritual development is effectively promoted through acts of collective worship. Pupils are introduced to their local and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is very caring and this is supported by the aims and objectives of the school. The parents' have very positive views of the school and give very good support.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher takes a significant role in establishing and maintaining the ethos of the school, despite a very heavy teaching commitment and significant recent staff changes. All staff work together as a team to develop the curriculum and raise standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective. The governing body is well organised and fulfils its statutory requirements. The chair of governors, who is a member of the local clergy, provides strong pastoral support to the school and makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual and social development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school uses the outcomes of assessment data to set suitable targets. There are regular visits by governors to observe the work of the school. These, together with the close relationships with parents and the wider community, mean the school is well informed of strengths and weaknesses. It uses the information well to plan for improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Staff are deployed effectively and the provision for children under five is particularly well planned to make good use of teachers and the new building. The school gives careful thought to make sure all developments are of good value and in the best interest of the pupils.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well led and managed. • It is successful in helping pupils become mature and responsible. • Teaching is good and pupils are expected to work hard. • Staff are approachable and helpful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities available outside lessons.

The parents are very supportive of the school and few parents expressed any concerns at all. Almost all parents returned a questionnaire seeking their views. The inspection team agrees with the positive views of the parents. Extra-curricular activities are typical for schools of this nature. The school provides extra music activities for pupils with the support of parents and different clubs and societies during the year. The parish hall adjacent to the school also provides a good range of early evening activities for children and co-operates with the school over this provision.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards of writing are high.

1. By the time pupils leave school at nine years of age skills in writing, reading and speaking and listening are above the typically expected levels for their age. They make good progress through school as most of the pupils enter school with normal achievement for their age in language and communication. Many aspects of writing skills are particularly good. This is broadly reflected in the results of National Curriculum tests at the age of seven. The progress is due to the rich and challenging curriculum with a good focus on literacy teaching.
2. Standards of handwriting are very good for many pupils by the age of nine. They write with a neat and cursive style. More able pupils are very fluent and easy writers. All pupils write at length for a range of purposes. For example, letters and accounts of their visits and experiences on a topic on Indian culture are long, lively and enjoyable. All pupils make good progress in handwriting in Years 3 and 4 and less able pupils often make very good progress.
3. Punctuation is also used effectively. By the age of seven, most of the pupils are accurately using full stops and capital letters to delineate sentences. Many pupils are using exclamation marks, speech marks and question marks accurately. By the age of nine they make writing lively and interesting through the use of punctuation and using capital letters for emphasis such as 'BOOM...BANG' and 'They look very tasty!' wrote one pupil. Pupils, including the less able, use apostrophes accurately. They use these elements of writing quite naturally in the first drafts of their work.
4. Pupils make good progress in understanding and use of grammar. They are developing a rich vocabulary through the effective use of well-chosen books and texts on which much of their work is based. They use accurately more complex words such as 'indescribably'. They use the correct vocabulary to describe parts of speech, such as verb, noun, adjective and adverb. This helps them to use language with increasing precision. They use interesting words to join one sentence to another such as 'especially'. The less able pupils show a good mastery of well-chosen phrases in their poetry, for example 'The hippo lumbers about'.
5. Pupils often write very clearly in reports and accounts. For example, in science pupils wrote a detailed description of their experiments on insulation. They wrote in a personal style but described the method, resources and predicted outcomes logically. They write quickly in lessons but the time available to complete written tasks is not always made clear to older pupils. In Year 2, accounts of the Great Fire of London are factually accurate, based on good research and make very enjoyable and easy reading. Good use is made of banks of words produced by the teacher and children to widen the vocabulary and encourage accurate spelling. Older pupils use dictionaries and thesaurus effectively to enliven their work.
6. Most pupils attain above expected levels in spellings. They spell most common polysyllabic words accurately, but are uncertain of some of the more unusual spelling patterns such as 'friends'. The school is resolving this through more direct teaching of spelling patterns and homework. Pupils use a 'read, cover and write' technique to learn spellings and are well versed in this.
7. Overall, pupils learn to enjoy writing and to use it for a wide range of purposes.

The pupils' knowledge of number and ability to calculate mentally are good.

8. Pupils leave the school with good skills in mental mathematics and a broad mathematical knowledge. They are particularly good in recalling multiplication facts and using their

knowledge to solve appropriate problems. There are relative weaknesses in written methods for older pupils, which will be discussed later.

9. In Year 1 and 2, pupils respond well to a very good pace of teaching in mathematics and the teachers' high expectations. The six and seven year olds know their 2, 5, 10 and 4 times tables well. They count back and forth accurately in 2s, 5s and 10s to high numbers. They use a good vocabulary when talking about the sums including 'times', 'sets of', 'more than' and 'less than'. The Year 1 and 2 pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of shape. In a very good mathematics lesson, the Year 1 pupils explained to those in Year 2 how the faces on cuboids are rectangular or square. They accurately describe how to make a net for cuboids and cylinders.
10. In Year 4 pupils extend this knowledge. Their response to multiplication and division questions is very quick and includes a wide range of multiplication. All pupils, including the less able, develop quick responses. They use terms such as 'double', 'half' and 'quarter' accurately in their calculations. The speed with which they answer questions is much faster than usually expected for their age. They have good strategies for adding and subtracting large numbers mentally.
11. The pupils' depth of knowledge in other areas of mathematics is good. This includes knowledge of shape and measure and data handling. They have a very good understanding of perimeter and of the correct measures to use in different situations. The attainment of pupils is a direct response to high expectation from teachers and good use of the National Numeracy Strategy to plan for teaching.

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

12. The quality of teaching was good or better in all lessons observed. It was very good in 25 per cent of lessons. Pupils become keen learners with enthusiasm for their work. Parents welcome the positive start this gives to their children's education and feel that the school prepares them well for transfer to the middle schools.
13. The youngest children are well taught. The nursery and reception children are given a very good start to early reading and writing skills through the well-planned lessons in letter sounds and word recognition. The teacher works closely with individual children and in small group activities. Alongside this, attractive and challenging role-play activities promote reading and writing skills. For example, in the 'office' area children fill in forms and 'write' on the computer. The teacher and the nursery nurse join in the role-play with enthusiasm and question children carefully. This encourages pupils to become increasingly confident and involved in their own learning.
14. An important feature of the teaching is that work is carefully matched to challenge pupils of all ages and ability. This is very important as the classes have at least two age groups in the morning and three in the afternoons. For example, whilst the more able Year 2 pupils produce detailed books about 'The Great Fire of London' using different reference materials, the youngest reception pupils work on initial letter sounds and key words from the story. In the Year 3 and 4 class most of the pupils conduct their own experiments and write their own accounts on the thermal properties of different materials. The less able pupils are well supported through close guidance on structuring their work and good support from the teacher. In most subjects pupils are given a lot of responsibility for sorting and organising their own work within a given framework. This encourages them towards independence and allows them to use initiative.
15. The teachers ask questions that challenge pupils and test their knowledge and earlier learning. They make use of a wide vocabulary for the subject and expect pupils to do the same. As a result pupils in Year 2 working on sound in science identified the 'vibrations' that 'move the air'. The use of a suitable vocabulary in English and mathematics is particularly good.

16. The pace of teaching is good and introductions to lessons are always interesting and clear. Pupils are gripped from the start of the lesson and this maintains interest and enthusiasm. For example, the nursery teacher made a dramatic start to a lesson on symmetry and pattern by dressing in two sets of clothes that at once created an asymmetrical effect. The children were really fascinated and looked carefully at their own clothes for patterns.
17. Pupils' own work is used well to stimulate and motivate the pupils. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils are actively involved in most of the wall displays by making labels and writing questions. For example, they do this effectively for their work on the history of the Tudors and a design and technology project. Pupils present poetry and prose in a range of well-made class books. They take great pride in these books and read them regularly. Work is always well presented in these books but some of the work in exercise books and worksheets is not of the same high quality.
18. Most activities are practical tasks that involve the pupils throughout. In Year 1 pupils made very good nets for three-dimensional shapes drawing carefully and talking throughout about the mathematics they were learning. In the Year 3/4 class, less able pupils use a good range of structured resources to find equivalent fractions. The teachers are trialling material for challenging all pupils, but particularly the more able, through developing their thinking skills.
19. Homework is effectively used through the school to improve pupils' basic skills. Pupils take reading and maths games home from an early age and communication with parents is very good.
20. The teaching is built on careful planning and a good knowledge of the pupils. Relationships are very good. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Although classes are small and pupils are with teachers for more than one year the ethos is challenging and thought provoking and there is no sense of complacency.

The caring ethos and very good links with the school community lead to good personal development.

21. The school is a close and caring community that reflects the aims and policies of the staff and governing body. The headteacher and the chair of the governing body take a very strong lead in establishing and maintaining this excellent ethos. The small school embodies the best features of a small family community. Staff know every pupil and their family well and this gives them a strong sense of belonging. Even families new to the school are soon drawn into the sense of community. As a result, relationships with parents are outstanding and they are fully supportive of the quality of education and work of the school. When pupils leave the school, the parents' first concern is to find a middle school that will continue to care for their children in the same way. The school benefits from this close link through the many parents who help in school regularly and the very successful fundraising that takes place, for example, for new building work.
22. There are very close links with the local church and pupils often take part in regular services as well as special events such as Christmas and harvest. The vicar, who is also chair of the governing body, makes regular visits to the school to take assemblies and work with pupils in the classroom. He knows every pupil and gives praise and support to their work. In the same way he motivates and encourages the staff and acknowledges their effort. In this he is well supported by the active governing body.
23. The governors make regular visits to the school to check on the quality of learning throughout the school. Visits are well planned with a clear focus and their findings are presented in a detailed report to staff and governors. The governors are positive and supportive. This longstanding practice also helps the head teacher to keep governors informed about the

impact of major changes or investments. For example, they have observed how changes to the curriculum through national strategies for teaching are improving learning in English and mathematics.

24. The headteacher takes a strong lead in maintaining a good ethos. Parents know their children will be cared for throughout the day. Assemblies provide good opportunities for social and spiritual development to take place. The headteacher involves the pupils fully through story and prayer. As a result spiritual development is very good. Pupils are given many opportunities to reflect the wonders of life. Pupils say the Lord's Prayer with understanding and sing a good range of hymns very well.
25. The provision for social and moral development is also very good. Many adults work in the school and they are all good role models. Pupils are given important responsibilities around school from simple tidying up and sorting for younger pupils to preparing the hall for assemblies and setting up the computers. Older pupils take good care of younger ones and this is deliberately encouraged. Behaviour is very good and pupils are involved in creating and monitoring rules.
26. The school provides a good range of cultural experiences. Well-chosen texts are a feature of all subjects and good quality fiction is the basis for many topics. Pupils learn to appreciate the art and music of different cultures and periods. For example, they study the art of Tudor times and the music and food of India. They study different religions in good depth. All pupils were involved in exciting work with local artists to produce a plaster cross for the Millennium and a series of stained glass windows. They are actively involved in charity projects.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Older pupils' written calculations in mathematics.

27. The school, rightly, places a strong emphasis on pupils' oral skills in mathematics and their ability to calculate mentally. As a result, by the time they leave school the depth of their understanding is good. However, older pupils do not develop enough their skills in written mathematics. Year 4 pupils do not often give written explanations of the strategies they use in their calculations or write their own mathematical problems. Opportunities are missed for pupils to extend this learning. For example pupils in the Year 3/4 class working on calculations involving fractions related to the four times table gave simple one figure answers to the questions rather than show the sums that they calculated. It was therefore difficult for the teacher to appreciate whether the strategies pupils were using were the most effective and whether they had securely understood the principles concerned. A more able pupil had done a project on finding totals in 'magic' squares. Although the answers were largely accurate there was little evidence of the calculations performed. The ability to show the calculations in written form is an important feature of high attainment in mathematics by the age of 11 and younger pupils do not yet make sufficient progress towards this.

Guidance for pupils to improve their work.

28. Work is regularly marked and all teachers make useful supportive comments to the pupils during lessons. However, they do not always identify the areas for improvement with sufficient precision. For example, teachers' comments are usually appropriately supportive such as 'very good' or 'excellent work', but they do not identify weaknesses such as key spelling errors, punctuation or misunderstandings in mathematics. As a result pupils sometimes continue to make the same simple error several times.
29. There is good practice in both key stages in teachers' explanations to pupils of the multiplication tables that they need to learn and they are very clear about what they have to do. However, the same practice is not extended to other aspects of their work such as other

number facts or aspects of grammar or the structure of their writing. As a consequence, whilst standards are high the more able and more mature pupils could still be further challenged.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

30. In order to raise standards further the headteacher, staff and governing body should:

- (1) Increase the expectations for pupils to write about the strategies and operations they use in mathematics in Key Stage 2. [Paragraph: 27]
- (2) Ensure that marking gives clear and suitable guidance to pupils and sets them regular targets for improving their standards of work, particularly in English and mathematics. [Paragraphs: 28, 29]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	8
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	25	75	0	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	4	31
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	4

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	29
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5
Average class size	16.5

Education support staff: YR – Y4

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	28

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	12

Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	123544
Total expenditure	120832
Expenditure per pupil	2599
Balance brought forward from previous year	13832
Balance carried forward to next year	15978

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	33
Number of questionnaires returned	30

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	23	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	37	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	79	21	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	57	43	0	0	0
The teaching is good.	72	28	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	43	7	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	20	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	27	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	77	23	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	83	17	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	87	13	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	33	10	0	3