



Whittingham Church of England First School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 122279
LEA Northumberland
Inspection number 281216
Inspection dates 5 July 2006 to 6 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Sheila Mawer

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	First	School address	Whittingham
School category	Voluntary controlled		Alnwick
Age range of pupils	3 to 9		Northumberland, NE66 4UP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01665 574222
Number on roll	71	Fax number	01665 574763
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Chris Blythe
Date of previous inspection	1 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Molloy

Age group 3 to 9	Inspection dates 5 July 2006 - 6 July 2006	Inspection number 281216
----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Whittingham First School is a small school serving a wide rural catchment area. Many pupils are bussed into school each day. There are 16 children who attend the Nursery part time. Below average numbers take free meals and a similar proportion have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All are from White British backgrounds. Social and economic features are average. Attainment to the Nursery varies each year but is broadly average. The headteacher has been in post for a year and is the only full-time member of staff.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides its pupils with a good standard of education. It offers good value for money. The school modestly understates its effectiveness in most areas. It is successful in promoting outstanding personal development and care. Parents are fully justified in their confidence in the school when they say, 'this is a wonderful school, with excellent standing in the community and where children make noticeable progress'.

Pupils achieve well by the end of Year 4. They make good progress to reach above average standards in English and science and average standards in mathematics. The school is beginning to address the weakness in mathematics through better teaching, but standards are not high enough yet. Good teaching in the Foundation Stage helps children make good progress and at least to attain and often exceed the standards expected for their age. In Year 2, progress has been good in halting a decline in standards last year and helping pupils to catch up.

Pupils learn well through good teaching. Assessment is good. Marking is weaker and individual target setting is not established. This means that pupils have fewer opportunities to know how well they are doing. The good curriculum provides considerable enrichment.

Leadership and management are good. The leadership team and governors work well together. They have brought about good improvements and addressed weaknesses from the previous inspection. They are moving the school forward with a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The capacity for further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in mathematics.
- Establish opportunities through marking and target setting for pupils to know and be involved in what they have learnt and where to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average overall. However, standards in mathematics are average and achievement is satisfactory. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and nearly all enter Year 1 having achieved the early learning goals. Half of them are already working on the National Curriculum.

In Key Stage 1, the pupils make good progress and by the age of seven reach above average standards in reading, writing and speaking and listening. The proportion reaching higher levels has increased. This represents a significant improvement from the test results last year, which were below average. In mathematics, standards are average. Pupils in Year 2 have made good progress in mathematics during the current

year, following some disruption to their education earlier in Key Stage 1 which slowed their progress.

Pupils in Year 4 make good progress in meeting their targets in reading and writing. Standards are above average. Progress in mathematics is satisfactory and standards are average. The lower standards are due to some weakness in mental calculation skills and a lack of challenge for more able pupils. In previous years, however, the targets in mathematics were met and pupils made good progress.

Standards in science are above average through a good focus on developing investigation skills. In information and communication technology (ICT), standards are just above average.

- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is outstanding. It is given a high priority in the school and has had a very positive impact on pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about different faiths and other countries to gain a good understanding of cultures other than their own.

Attitudes, behaviour and relationships are exemplary. Pupils appreciate everything the school provides and enjoy their learning considerably. This is reinforced through good attendance. Presentation of work has improved since the previous inspection. The school has used an excellent range of initiatives to ensure that pupils keep safe and fully engage in a healthy lifestyle. All eagerly take part in 'wake and shake' sessions and the many sporting activities that keep them fit.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community through regular participation in local events and fund raising. The school council works effectively and has recently improved outdoor facilities for play. Monitors around the school are responsible and effective. Excellent participation with local schools through sporting and musical events equips the pupils well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and enable pupils to make good progress. Relationships are excellent and this helps them to work hard. All teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and lessons move on at a lively pace through good questioning skills. Challenging texts such as 'Dear Greenpeace' are used in Years 3 and 4 not only to extend ideas for writing but also to consider environmental issues. Assessment information is used well in English to plan for different ages and abilities.

Good teaching overall in mathematics is beginning to address the weakness in standards. For example, in Years 1 and 2, the teacher used the interactive whiteboard very effectively to explain new learning and help the pupils to carry out problem solving with accuracy and skill. The examination of pupils' work in mathematics shows that expectations are sometimes too low in planning work for the more able. Where the teaching of the mental starter is only satisfactory, the pupils are not given the challenge of the best lessons to solve mental calculations quickly and accurately.

Assessment procedures are good and the school is in the early stages of introducing individual targets. Marking is not helping pupils sufficiently to know how well they are doing or to identify areas for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and supports effective teaching and learning. Provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, ensuring their needs are fully met. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good and plans are well advanced for an outdoor area to extend opportunities for physical development. Meaningful links are made between subjects, which makes the curriculum broad and creative. In Years 1 and 2, for example, a good geography lesson on 'Barnaby Bear' helped pupils to learn mapping skills, sing in French, make a collage and write a postcard home. However, numeracy and ICT skills are not used enough across the curriculum to help raise standards further in these subjects.

Opportunities for enrichment are excellent through very good extra-curricular activities and a wide range of visits and visitors. Special themed days, such as 'World Book Day' add interest and enjoyment for pupils. The Healthy Schools Award and the review of personal, social and health education has strengthened the curriculum considerably and had a very positive impact on the personal development of the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Provision is good, with some outstanding features. A high level of care is promoted through a strong Christian ethos and very positive relationships. Parents hold the school in high regard and comments such as, 'staff show great empathy and dedication in their support for the pupils' reflect the outstanding care. Robust arrangements are made for health and safety. Good child protection procedures are in place. Effective links are made with a range of local agencies to promote pupils' health, safety and welfare. Support staff are well trained and knowledgeable about pupils' personal needs and the routines of school life. This ensures an orderly environment at lunch and break times.

Advice on how well pupils are doing in meeting their individual targets is not established. Therefore pupils are not involved in setting and reviewing their own targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has, in a very short time, raised standards significantly in Key Stage 1 and created a good climate for learning and further improvements. She has united the dedicated staff with a strong sense of purpose and enriched the personal development and care for learners. Subject leaders play an important role in the management and evaluation of the school. Rigorous monitoring has resulted in good standards in English, but there is more to do to improve mathematics.

Evaluation procedures are good. The school's improvement plan sets out a clear agenda for improvement. The weakness in mathematics has been identified through the effective tracking of progress. The views of children, parents, staff and governors are used to draw up the improvement plan. Governors are fully involved in partnership with the headteacher in evaluating the work of the school. For example, they were instrumental in devising and evaluating the questionnaires sent to parents to determine their views of the school. They hold the headteacher in high regard but are not afraid to challenge her, or to take difficult decisions in the best interests of the school. Good leadership skills at all levels in school and the headteacher's ability to raise standards quickly and effectively provide the school with a good basis for improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Alexandra House

33 Kingsway

London

WC2B 6SE

T 0207 421 6800

F 0207 421 6707

Ofsted helpline

08456 404045

To the pupils of:

Whittingham Church of England First School

Whittingham

Alnwick

Northumberland

NE66 4UP

5 July 2006

Dear Pupils

I would like to thank you all for making me feel so welcome and giving me lots of help when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed my visit and especially finding out how much you all enjoy your learning at the school. I agree with the headteacher and governors that your school is good and has many strengths. I particularly like your excellent behaviour and how well you and all adults really care for each other in the school. Because you work so hard in lessons and the teaching is good, you are making good progress in your learning. You are lucky to have excellent school meals as well as lots of clubs and activities that help you to keep really healthy.

Your headteacher, as well as the other staff and governors, are working hard to make the school even better by helping you to make more progress in your numeracy lessons. They are also going to improve the way they mark your work and involve you more in knowing how well you are doing. They will do this by setting individual targets for you to work towards in English, mathematics and science.

Good luck to you all in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Sheila Mawer

Lead Inspector