



# Wark CE Aided First School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 122300  
**Local Authority** Northumberland  
**Inspection number** 292363  
**Inspection dates** 13–14 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Paul Wagstaff

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First	<b>School address</b>	Wark
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Hexham, Northumberland
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9		NE48 3LS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01434 230247
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	37	<b>Fax number</b>	01434 230247
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Dr C Moore
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs S Edwards
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2002		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

Wark CE School is a very small school. It serves a widespread rural area. All pupils come from White British families and have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meal is low and a small number of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. The school holds the Healthy Schools, Eco-schools, Activemark and Artsmark accreditation and is linked to a primary learning partnership with other schools in the area. The school has the award of Investors in People.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The school is a good school with some outstanding features, providing good value for money. Issues arising from the last inspection have been tackled effectively and the school is well placed with good capacity among staff and governors to secure further improvement. Strengths from the last inspection have been maintained.

Standards on entry to the school are below average. Children make good progress and reach standards in line with those expected by the end of the Foundation Stage. Good progress continues. Standards are above average by the time pupils leave the school. Standards in reading are particularly high, reflecting a year on year improvement in recent times. Pupils listen well, share their ideas, but lack confidence in explaining how to set about solving problems. Few older pupils confidently pose questions to each other in clarifying ideas or in suggesting improvements.

Pupils are very supportive of the school. They have very good relationships with their teachers and are keen to learn. As one parent said on asking her son how much he enjoys school, he replied '100 per cent'. Pupils enjoy school because they are well cared for, valued, supported and guided by teachers, and given work that is interesting and relevant.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan a good range of learning experiences to interest and extend pupils' learning. Although teachers mark work regularly, pupils are not always sufficiently clear on what they need to do next in order to improve. A good curriculum captures the interest of pupils and both broadens and deepens their knowledge in important areas; for example, through links with other faiths and cultures and in developing a global understanding. Outstanding provision is made to encourage healthy lifestyles and an understanding of ecology and protection of the environment. Pupils are very conscious of health and the need for safe physical exercise. The commitment to improving provision and giving children a good start is seen through the achievement of several curriculum awards. Pupils know how to keep safe. They contribute effectively to improving the school through making relevant suggestions. Above average standards in basic skills ensure pupils have a good grounding to prepare them for the next stage of education.

Governors and the headteacher have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for development. They monitor provision rigorously. The governing body makes an outstanding contribution to improving opportunities for pupils and ensures that the school maintains a position at the centre of the local community.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' confidence in applying their skills and knowledge in solving problems, investigating ideas and in challenging each other to improve.
- Ensure pupils take greater responsibility for their own learning through improved knowledge of what they need to do next in order to improve and make progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Children join the infant class with skills that reflect a broad range of ability but which are below those expected overall for their age. They make good progress through the Foundation Stage and, by the end of the Reception year, are attaining levels expected for this age group.

Pupils make good progress through the infant and junior classes and achieve above average standards by the end of Year 4. Due to fluctuations in the size of each year group, it is difficult to draw conclusions on patterns of performance over time in the national assessments for 7 year olds. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2006 were well above average in reading, writing and in mathematics which reflected good achievement for these pupils who were attaining above average standards on entry to the school. Standards in reading are particularly high, reflecting year on year improvement across the school. Although progress in mathematics is good, it is better in knowledge of number facts and calculation methods than in using and applying mathematics in solving problems. Pupils speak with confidence and listen carefully but few older pupils confidently explain how they have tackled problems or ask questions of each other to further their knowledge and understanding. Able pupils achieve well and those with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress against their individual targets.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development, including moral, social and cultural development, is good. Spiritual development is strong. Pupils value the contributions of each other and respond well to opportunities provided for reflection and prayer. In making suggestions to improve the school, they show regard for the feelings of others; for example, in providing a bench in the playground for those who wish to sit on their own to think. Pupils' knowledge of their own and other cultures is good. This is reflected in both their attitudes and celebration of similarities and differences. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils work well together when given opportunities to cooperate and share ideas. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress in learning to take turns and in working together.

Pupils have an outstanding grasp of the impact of food and exercise on their health, taking the Healthy Schools award very seriously. Good achievement in English and mathematics prepares them well for their future economic well-being.

Pupils attend school regularly. They are punctual. Attendance is above average.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning is good overall and account for the good progress pupils make. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils. Learning is made fun and relevant. Pupils respond well to this and speak very positively about the school, their teachers and the work they are doing. The broad age and ability range among pupils in both classes provides a challenge for teachers. However, work is planned to meet the needs of different age groups to ensure all children are included and learn. For example, in a mathematics lesson in the infant class, the teacher kept a lively pace in developing pupils' mental calculation, posing questions for children in the Foundation Stage and quickly switching to more challenging questions for older pupils. This kept them motivated and on the edge of their seats ready to take on the next challenge. Such teaching ensures that children in the Foundation Stage are supported well, make good progress and benefit from the challenge of good older role models. Opportunities for pupils to work together in solving problems or to learn from each other through asking thoughtful questions and making suggestions are more limited. Teachers' own questioning does not always give enough attention to either encouraging pupils to explain their ideas or to ask relevant questions themselves. Teachers mark work regularly and give useful comments on how well pupils have done but do not always identify the next steps that would help them move on in their learning. Teaching assistants are used well and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are generally supported well in lessons.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. A broad and rich curriculum is planned which has sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of the wide age range in each class. The curriculum for the youngest children in the school is very effective, providing good opportunities to develop skills across all areas of learning. An appropriate emphasis is given to developing literacy and mathematics and to providing good opportunities to use and apply literacy skills through other subjects. Curriculum provision for low attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory. Provision is good where individual plans are used which focus upon overcoming pupils' specific weaknesses. However, work in some lessons does not always meet their individual needs. Local resources and links with other schools and community services are used very well to strengthen curriculum support; for example, the use of specialist physical education teaching and work with the National Park ranger. The development of positive attitudes towards healthy lifestyles, and an understanding of ecological and global issues are outstanding. This is recognised through the achievement of several externally accredited awards. The curriculum is enriched through an excellent link with a local university, which is used very effectively to strengthen pupils' knowledge of different faiths and cultures.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Well organised pastoral support ensures pupils are kind, considerate and feel valued within school. They are encouraged to suggest improvements and to take responsibility, for example in organising their own collective worship. The school has a good system of checks and staff training to ensure pupils remain safe and secure. A comprehensive assessment of risks is undertaken to ensure pupils are safe and well cared for on visits and within the school. The development needs of individuals are considered carefully when planning learning experiences and systems for monitoring and checking the progress of individual pupils are effective. Each child is monitored and this information is used well to inform parents of the progress their children make and also to identify issues to help improve teaching. The school's focus on improving scientific investigation arose directly from careful analysis of pupils' progress in this area. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are identified early and good individual programmes of support are provided. Expectations for behaviour and positive attitudes are clear and understood. This ensures that pupils work together in a calm and well ordered learning environment. Very good communication systems keep parents well informed. Good systems are in place to maintain the good attendance.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. A good ethos is promoted, which reflects strong Christian values where all pupils are treated as equals. A strong partnership has been established with the community.

The headteacher provides good leadership. Although maintaining a major teaching role, she takes significant responsibility for leading and initiating developments and has an accurate overview of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The process of looking closely at the school to identify priorities for development is rigorous. Views of parents and the wider community are taken seriously. Good plans are in place to make the school even better. The role taken by the governing body is excellent. Governors are very active in monitoring the school and in identifying priorities for improvement. This contributes significantly to ensuring that the school continues to improve. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met and make an outstanding contribution towards improving the overall provision for pupils. They have been very successful in initiating curriculum developments which have directly improved pupils' learning experiences; for example through links with schools overseas. They actively support developing pupils' awareness of health, ecology, and a global dimension to learning. They have initiated several links through a local university which have contributed significantly to the good cultural knowledge and understanding shown by pupils.

All staff take appropriate responsibility for aspects of the school's work. Management of Foundation Stage provision is very effective, ensuring all make good progress within a curriculum that encourages curiosity and learning across all areas of learning.

The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Finances are managed well to provide a satisfactory staffing ratio to get the best from the budget. The school has successfully tackled the key issues from the previous inspection. There is good capacity for further improvement.



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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Wark CE First School

Wark

Hexham

Northumberland

NE48 3LS

14 February 2007

Dear Children

I really enjoyed visiting your school recently. Thank you for making me so welcome. I really enjoyed talking to you, looking at the work you have been doing and seeing you work in class.

I was pleased to see how well you were making progress in your reading, writing and mathematics. You have a good school. You work and behave well and I was particularly pleased to see how much you know about the need for healthy eating and exercise. You certainly enjoy school and take care of each other to make sure you and your friends are safe and happy. This is good and I know is very important to you and all the adults who help in the school.

You all work hard in class but I think your work could be even better if you worked together more. I have asked your teachers to let you work in pairs and small groups more often to solve problems and to share ideas. I also think it would help you make even better progress if you knew what you had to do next to improve your reading, writing and mathematics. I have asked your teachers to talk to you more so that you know what to do to make your work even better.

Thank you again for being so helpful and welcoming when I came to your school.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wagstaff

Lead Inspector