

Bedlington Whitley Memorial Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122281
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314257
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Joan Elton

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Michael Eldridge
Headteacher	Mrs Judith Bremner
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Gordon Terrace Bedlington, Northumberland NE22 5DE
Telephone number	01670 822994
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Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bedlington Whitley Memorial C of E (VA) First School is larger than average. It serves a predominantly White British population with a very small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds. All but a very small minority of the pupils have English as a first language. The school draws from an area of social and economic diversity. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. A below average percentage of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Bedlington Whitley Memorial Church of England First School is an outstanding school and its self-evaluation is accurate in every respect. It provides excellent value for money.

The school is at the heart of the community and richly deserves the high esteem in which it is held by pupils and parents. It has a clear and exciting vision for development. It is a thinking school, regularly reflecting on its own practice in order to provide the best possible education for all its pupils. All staff are well-trained, valued and supported. They deliver a vibrant and creative curriculum, in which basic skills are taught excellently and pupils' personal development is greatly enhanced. Behaviour is excellent and pupils have a real enthusiasm for learning. This has led to continuous improvement in pupils' achievement and progress.

When children enter Nursery the skills of many are below those typical for this age group. However, by the time they leave the school pupils are performing at above average levels for their age with a large number achieving significantly high standards. This represents excellent progress and is the result of outstanding provision across the school. This provision includes excellent teaching and learning, rigorous assessment and evaluation and a very high standard of care. Marking of work for older pupils is regular but does not always indicate clearly enough what they need to do to improve. The school's main focus is the education of the whole child. To this end, the excellent leadership team works most effectively with the local church, the middle school, and local authority services to promote pupils' welfare. Pupils have an excellent understanding of keeping fit and healthy. The leadership team also ensures that pupils' views are heard and their ideas developed. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for future learning.

This school has made excellent progress since the last inspection, addressing thoroughly all the issues for improvement identified at that time. It has an outstanding capacity for further improvement because, although it has many outstanding features, the leadership team is never complacent.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

This is outstanding. Children make exceptional progress in all areas of learning, enjoying their time in school and quickly growing in confidence. An enthusiastic and highly skilled team of staff create an environment which is warm and caring but also challenging. Children experience an imaginative range of well-structured activities both inside and outside the classroom, which ensure their development towards the nationally agreed early learning goals. Assessment is continuous, systematic and very effective. Individual needs are quickly identified and appropriate strategies put in place. Basic skills are very well taught and efficient routines are quickly established. Courtesy, consideration and good behaviour are much in evidence. Relationships between staff and children are excellent. Staff also work very successfully with parents so that they know what their child is learning, how he or she is progressing and what they can do to assist their further development. The Foundation Stage is very well led and managed. Staff work well together, have an accurate understanding of children's needs and ensure these are met consistently, using all available resources.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the marking of older pupils' work gives them a clear understanding of what they need to do to make progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' current work and the school's data show that standards are very high. Pupils' achievement is also outstanding.

When children begin school most have skills below those typical for this age group. Excellent Foundation Stage provision ensures that children settle quickly and achieve very well. By the end of Reception the great majority reach the levels expected of them and an increasing number exceed them. This represents exceptional progress.

Pupils continue to achieve very well in Key Stage 1 and many are currently performing above national standards. This reflects the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2, which were above the national average from 2002 to 2006 and were even higher in 2007. In Key Stage 2, achievement is excellent. Many pupils are working at above average levels. In 2006 and 2007, Year 4 assessment data showed that standards have continued to improve and that the school has exceeded its challenging targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers because of the school's successful inclusion policies.

Although Key Stage 1 national assessments indicate that girls attain higher standards than boys, there has been year-on-year improvement because of successful school interventions. As a result, the gender gap in the 2007 results was much smaller with boys outperforming girls at the higher levels in numeracy.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is strongly promoted as soon as children begin Nursery and this continues throughout the school. As a result, all pupils show very positive attitudes. They want to contribute and by their response to lessons they show their enjoyment for school. Attendance is good and much improved. Many pupils could not wait to tell the inspector how exciting they find their lessons, and how good it is to be with their school friends. They are very well-mannered. They express their views confidently and listen to those of others. Social skills are very well developed. High standards in writing, numeracy and technology demonstrate how well staff are preparing them for adult life. Pupils enjoy physical exercise. 'Yoga lessons are brilliant!' confirmed one. They show a very clear understanding of how to eat healthily and appreciate the tasty lunchtime choices. Pupils' good understanding of safe practices starts early in their school life because safety issues are carefully explained to them. Pupils say they are listened to and are fully involved in decisions important to them. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's Christian values, nurtured through links with the local church, are a significant source of the pupils' spiritual awareness which is unusually strong.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. They are central to the pupils' excellent progress. The staff work well as a team, supporting each other and sharing the same determination to enhance pupils' learning as effectively as possible. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and an accurate understanding of pupils' needs. They have high expectations of all pupils. Pupils are well motivated and respond very well to challenge. Throughout the school, children are encouraged to develop as independent learners, for example by setting themselves more difficult problems. In all classes teachers demonstrate excellent classroom management skills and the use of efficient routines, which all pupils follow, so that movement between activities is smooth. As a result, learning is brisk and pupils produce a lot of work. Relationships are particularly productive because teachers demonstrate respect and care for each individual pupil. They devise imaginative activities for work in pairs, small groups and the whole class. They make learning fun and pupils respond with enthusiasm. Teachers are particularly expert at devising questions that test and deepen understanding. This also develops pupils' confidence in speaking and listening. Furthermore, it gives teachers a more accurate picture of every pupil's achievement and enables them to identify more accurately the next step in learning. The oral guidance that teachers give to pupils is consistently well informed and encouraging. However, marking, particularly for the older pupils, does not always indicate clearly how improvements can be made and this limits its effectiveness.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It offers exciting opportunities for all pupils. Teachers use role play, investigations and imaginative resources to engage the pupils. These strategies, along with very effective, focused support, are incorporated into well-planned programmes to boost the achievement of all pupils. The curriculum is enriched by the teaching of French, imaginative projects shared with the middle school and by an extensive range of visits and visitors. For example, links with Creative Partnerships enabled children to make a high quality film based on a local mining accident. There is also a very good range of after-school clubs and opportunities to play a musical instrument. The school has excellent programmes for developing understanding of relationships, environmental care and global interdependence. The superb grounds, designed by pupils, incorporate adventure equipment, planting areas, and impressive sculptures to promote storytelling and other imaginative activities. Much improved access to modern information and communication technology (ICT) has enabled it to be used fully and creatively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff know pupils very well and have established excellent relationships with them and their parents. 'This is a fantastic school. The head is outstanding and the teachers are wonderful,' was a typical response in the parents' questionnaires. Pupils comment that all staff are caring. Pastoral care is excellent. Procedures to ensure pupils' protection and safety are in place. The school makes excellent use of outside

agencies to support individual needs and the provision of an inclusion mentor shows the school's commitment to high quality care and support.

The school has excellent systems for monitoring pupils' progress. These enable staff to react quickly to underachievement and to provide the appropriate help. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school which she communicates effectively to all staff and pupils so that they are very well motivated. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, are encouraged to show initiative and to try out ideas. When they do, they are provided with the necessary training, resources and encouragement so that they succeed and the children benefit. The headteacher is proud of the school and its achievements but is always striving for improvement. She is very well supported by her deputy who has successfully led many initiatives across the school.

Subject and key stage coordinators also contribute greatly to the leadership team by supporting and developing their colleagues and by systematic monitoring. As a result, policies and practice are consistently applied and very high expectations are maintained.

Governance is outstanding. Governors work as a very successful team with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They actively participate in school life, have the same creative vision for the school and share its commitment to development of the whole child. Their understanding of the school's strengths and issues for development is accurate because they regularly monitor aspects of school life and review data. When difficult decisions have to be made, they analyse all aspects and allocate resources fairly and efficiently.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

19 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bedlington Whitley Memorial Church of England First School, Northumberland, NE22 5DE

Thank you for the welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We loved meeting you and were most impressed with your manners and your excellent behaviour. We appreciated the help you gave us and enjoyed listening to your ideas and opinions. You express yourselves very confidently.

We think that your school is outstanding. Your teachers and other staff take excellent care of you and provide you with lots of interesting lessons and exciting opportunities. They are exceptionally successful in helping you with your work. You make excellent progress in your school. You also learn how to be kind to others and to understand that different people have different opinions and feelings. These are very important skills which you will need throughout your life.

We found your school to be a bright, attractive and a very happy place, both inside and out. We noticed how well everyone got on together. No wonder someone thought it was like 'home!' In lessons you are very enthusiastic and clearly enjoy the interesting challenges your teachers set you. The school is going to help you further by writing more comments on the work of older children so that they understand how to make improvements. This will help them when they go to the middle school. Older children can help their teachers by reading these comments and following their suggestions.

We hope you all continue to enjoy school and to work so well. I know you will enjoy all the exciting changes in your school grounds. The cross of St Cuthbert will look so beautiful in the spring!

We send you all our good wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

J Elton
R McFarlane
A Stafford

Additional Inspectors