

# Whitfield Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122303
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	314261
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Moira Fitzpatrick

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 category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	21
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs J Lumley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Elizabeth Baker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 July 2003
<b>School address</b>	Whitfield Hexham Northumberland NE47 8JH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01434 345267
<b>Fax number</b>	01434 345267

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average church school serving a widespread rural community. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds, all White British, and none speaks English as an additional language. A well below average number of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities fluctuates between average and below average.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the pupils' achievement and standards, the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' personal development, the care, guidance and support for pupils and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, looking at pupils' work and scrutiny of assessment data and other school documents, as well as from discussion with staff, governors and the children. Other aspects of the school were not investigated in detail but there was no indication that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This good school is held in very high esteem by parents, who are unanimous in their praise for the school. They are rightly proud of their children's achievements, for no matter what their starting points, all pupils learn well and make good progress throughout their time in the school. The high standards that pupils reach are reflected in their national test results at the end of Year 2, which have been above average for the past four years. All pupils do particularly well in reading, where progress is often excellent, so that at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 they consistently exceed the level expected for their age. The great majority of pupils at the end of Year 4 are working at levels that are higher than expected for their age. Pupils' achievement is good; many of the more able pupils make exceptional progress and are reaching the level expected of able 11-year-olds. Pupils' hard work, combined with their enjoyment of learning, makes a huge contribution to their academic success.

Teaching is consistently good and all planning is firmly rooted in very good knowledge of the individual pupils' needs. This is apparent both in the tasks set and in teachers' questioning, which is geared to ensure that each pupil has the opportunity to contribute to whole class learning at their own level. This does much to foster confidence and build the self-esteem of each pupil and so improve their progress. Pupils are always challenged in a supportive framework so they are confident to work independently, knowing help is always at hand and that they will succeed with the tasks. While all pupils work hard to succeed, sometimes the presentation of work suffers and there are instances of poor handwriting and presentation, especially in some boys' work. The curriculum is good and underpins the school's aim of meeting the needs and interests of all pupils. Work on display illustrates how pupils pursue their own interests in topics and carry out their own research. In all work seen, the individual shines through. The school's excellent partnership with schools and other organisations successfully promotes pupils' social skills as well as making the best use of resources within the network of schools. Older pupils speak with great enthusiasm of their visits to places of interest with pupils from neighbouring schools.

From the time they join the school, children are encouraged to be independent and to make a contribution to help the school run smoothly. All staff seize the opportunity provided by the small class sizes to develop each pupil as a unique individual. They show a thorough knowledge and understanding of the needs of each pupil and develop their strengths in a very caring family atmosphere, firmly based on Christian values. The youngest children are set an excellent example by older ones who involve them in playground activities and care for them if they are not happy. Pupils quickly learn to express their views and make suggestions for improvement to the life of the school in school council meetings. Pupils are proud of their recent achievements which include a lovely garden for study and reflection, some exciting playground equipment and sensible school rules that are simple to follow.

In all areas of school life pupils are extremely courteous and considerate with each other. They listen to each other in discussions and share the playground toys and facilities fairly. Their behaviour is impeccable because they exercise self-control and think about the impact of their actions on others. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is seen in their good attendance as well as in their full commitment to everything the school has to offer. They are thrilled by all aspects of learning and are especially excited by the many opportunities for visits, visitors and after school clubs – which are based on their suggestions at the beginning of each term. Pupils of all abilities are very well prepared for the next stage of learning through their excellent personal

qualities and their good standards in basic skills. They understand the need for a healthy lifestyle and have demonstrated their enthusiasm for exercise by recently being awarded the nationally recognised Activemark for the second time.

The school is well led and managed through a strong collegiate approach and staff share a strong commitment to the school's values. Besides providing excellent care, support and guidance for pupils in school, high quality links with parents and the community ensure all round support for pupils' learning. The school sets challenging targets and its data show that these are usually met or exceeded. Management is firmly based on collaboration and all are involved in making decisions. Consequently, self-evaluation is effective and the school has an accurate picture of what is working well and the next steps to improve. A comprehensive improvement plan for the coming years identifies the correct priorities to raise standards and staff are working together to share out roles and responsibilities appropriately. At present it is unclear who is responsible for carrying out identified actions and for evaluating their impact on standards. Governance is good. The very supportive governors monitor what is happening in school on a regular basis. Governors and staff are rightly proud of the school's reputation in the community and this is very evident in the photographs of the school's 250 year celebrations. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

The majority of children join the Foundation Stage with skills that are typical of children of this age. They benefit from a rich curriculum and close links with carers and parents who play a full part in supporting the children's learning. They enjoy learning and are well prepared for the challenges of school life. Good teaching is based on a thorough knowledge of each child's needs; it helps children of all abilities and starting points to make good progress. School data verify that nearly all children reach the level expected for their age and that each year a good proportion exceeds this level. The school's excellent care and support for all children ensure that the youngest feel safe, secure and confident enough to learn independently.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve standards of handwriting and presentation – especially that of the boys.
- Identify personnel to be responsible for carrying out the activities identified in the school's improvement plan and for evaluating their impact.

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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?	2
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	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

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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<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.

## Annex A

**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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	2
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



**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

17 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitfield Church of England Voluntary Aided First School

Whitfield, Northumberland, NE47 8JH

Thank you for helping me to find out so much about your school when I visited recently. Your friendly welcome and excellent behaviour made my visit a pleasure. It was a real treat to see you all doing so well with your work. I'm not surprised that your parents and teachers are so proud of you. Nor am I surprised that you like school so much because you learn so many interesting things and have a marvellous playground to enjoy with your friends.

Your kindness to each other and to your teachers makes your school so happy and safe. I was delighted to see how many jobs you all do to make your school run smoothly. Your school council is a very good idea and I could see that you don't miss a chance to make suggestions to make your good school even better. Some of you told me how well your teachers look after you and how quickly they can spot if you need help. I agree and think this is one of the very best parts of your school. Your parents are very pleased that you are extremely well cared for.

One of the things I looked at was how well you understand how to stay fit and healthy. There is no doubt that you understand about taking plenty of exercise because you were so active and energetic in the playground. When we had lunch together it was lovely to see how healthy your appetites are and how you all eat sensible food. It is not surprising that you all have a school lunch because your school cook makes such delicious meals.

Although yours is a good school with many things that are excellent, I have a suggestion for how you can help to make it even better. I think that some of you could take more care with your handwriting and presentation so that your work always looks neat and carefully done. I know you will try hard to improve because I have seen that you do that whenever you are asked to by your teachers. I have also suggested that the school makes clear who will be responsible for different improvements in the coming year.

All good wishes for the future to you all.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick

Inspector