

Whittingham Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122279
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	327683
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Linda Buller

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	46
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Michelle Macaulay
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Molloy
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Whittingham Alnwick Northumberland NE66 4UP
Telephone number	01665 574222

Age group	3–9
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
Inspection number	327683

Fax number

01665 574763

Age group 3-9

Inspection dates 4-5 March 2009

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small rural school serves an area which is similar to others nationally in terms of social and economic advantage. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A smaller proportion of pupils than in other schools claim a free school meal. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and no pupils have a statement of their special educational needs. Pupil numbers have fallen since the last inspection and the headteacher remains 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. It has some outstanding features and has improved well since the last inspection. A strong Christian ethos underpins all that the school does. Adults provide excellent role-models and consequently the school is a happy and inviting place in which to work and learn. Parents are very positive in their support of the school, they are pleased with the progress their children make and appreciative of how closely the school involves them in their children's learning.

Throughout the school excellent pastoral care leads to outstanding personal development and well-being for pupils. Pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their enthusiastic participation in activities and their well above average attendance. Pupils have excellent social skills, they are polite and courteous and extremely keen to share their pride in their own and others' achievements. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and possess an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy diets and taking regular exercise. Good partnerships with other schools, agencies and local experts help pupils to develop a secure knowledge of safe practices. Charity initiatives and participation in a range of celebrations, such as Chinese New Year, food for the homeless and seeds for Africa help pupils to develop a good understanding of social and cultural diversity. Excellent personal qualities and good basic knowledge prepare pupils well for the future.

Good teaching is contributing to pupils' good achievement. Teachers' excellent relationships with their pupils ensure that pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning and behave extremely well. Explanations, instructions and questioning promote learning effectively. High quality feedback provides pupils with a clear view of how well they are doing and provides effective guidance regarding what is needed to further improve their work. The small number of pupils in each year group can make comparisons between years unreliable; nevertheless, standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 have steadily increased in recent years and are above average overall. However standards in mathematics in Year 3 and 4 are around average. Good curriculum provision, which links subjects together, is one of the reasons for pupils' very good progress in literacy. Central topics such as the current 'Living Eggs' are used very effectively to motivate learners and provide them with a real purpose for their work. This is less effective in mathematics where pupils in Key Stage 2 do not have the same extended opportunities to put their good mathematical knowledge into practice.

Good leadership and management have ensured the school's continuous improvement. Under the clear direction of the headteacher, staff, governors and parents work collaboratively to provide pupils with a good standard of education within a school where everyone is treated equally. Community cohesion is promoted well. The school provides a valued service both to those within the local village and for those living in isolated rural settings. The school has carried out an audit of its provision and plans are in place to further extend the school's good work in national and global dimensions. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and actions taken to bring about improvement have in the main been highly successful. This provides the school with a good capacity to improve further. However, monitoring activities are in the most part informal. This lack of rigour means that the school does not always check carefully enough if changes to curriculum provision have resulted in better progress by pupils. This is particularly evident in mathematics in Key Stage 2. Governance is satisfactory. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and monitor provision well to maintain good quality provision. However, they have not ensured

that the Nursery provision is always led by a school teacher in line with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good links with parents and carers and clear routines ensure that children make a good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Standards on entry vary from year-to-year, but most children enter the Nursery with levels of skill and knowledge that are expected of their age. Provision for children's learning and development is good. However, Nursery children are not always led by a school teacher. Nevertheless children achieve well because they are helped to develop good attitudes to learning and thoroughly enjoy the tasks planned for them. There is a good range of activities with a clear emphasis each day on oral work and linking sounds and letters, leading to early reading and emergent writing. Occasionally, these are over-directed by adults and this limits children's independence. Effective planning leads to good use of the outdoor area to extend children's experiences in all areas of their learning. Staff ensure that children's welfare is promoted exceptionally well. Staff and children enjoy warm and positive relationships and this fosters in children a strong sense of security and self confidence. As a result, they make outstanding progress in their personal and social development. Children go out of their way to look out for each other and encourage their friends to participate and play together. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Regular assessments of children's progress are recorded; however, these are not yet analysed fully on entry to give a complete picture of children's progress from the beginning of Nursery to the end of their Reception Year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rigour of monitoring procedures to increase the rate of pupils' progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that the Nursery provision is always led by a school teacher.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. Most pupils enter Year 1 with standards that are slightly above average, with high standards in their personal development. In Key Stage 1, pupils experience good teaching; consequently, most pupils attain standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. A strong focus on improving pupils' literacy skills resulted in exceptional progress by pupils who left Year 4 in 2008, with many attaining levels well above those expected for their age. Pupils made satisfactory progress in mathematics in Year 4 to maintain above expected standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make the same good overall progress as other groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Outstanding development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding provides pupils with an excellent belief in their own ability and a high level of respect and concern for the views and feelings of others. Positive attitudes and excellent relationships permeate every aspect of school life. Attendance levels are outstanding. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, they are polite, articulate and behave superbly. They enthusiastically partake in the

opportunities to join clubs and playtimes are enjoyable social occasions. Pupils make very sensible choices about what they eat and take regular exercise. This is because they have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves fit and healthy. Pupils have a very strong sense of belonging and make a significant contribution to their own and the wider community. By the time they leave, pupils have acquired very secure social and academic skills for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils generally make good gains in their learning because teachers plan well and make imaginative use of resources to make learning fun. During lessons, teachers provide pupils with very good feedback based on regular assessments of how well they are doing. Excellent relationships between adults and pupils give learners the confidence to 'have a go' safe in the knowledge that further explanation and support will be forthcoming if needed. Teachers use questions well to involve all pupils in lessons but sometimes miss opportunities to target questions to different abilities within the class. Good use is made of information and communication technology to encourage pupils to research information and to present and record information in different ways.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is highly successful at supporting pupils' social and personal development. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge of what makes each of them unique and respecting this in others. Residential visits, numerous clubs and a wide range of activities add much to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Whole-school topics and meaningful links between subjects add significantly to pupils' good and at times very good progress in reading and writing. The school have implemented a revised curriculum for the teaching of mathematics. This has led to improved pupil knowledge and higher standards at the end of Key Stage 1. However, it is less effective in providing pupils in Key Stage 2 with a wide range of opportunities to put their good mathematical knowledge into practice.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides excellent day-to-day care for pupils. The outstanding family ethos in the school is central to the success in developing pupils' outstanding personal and social skills. The school's commitment to pupils' well-being is exemplified by the way all pupils are known and responded to as individuals and helped to be responsible members of the school community. The school's systems for safeguarding pupils meet national guidelines. Guidance for pupils' academic progress is strong and pupils make very good use of the advice and the targets teachers give to them. The school has good links with other agencies to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for and make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher works very effectively with the whole school community ensuring high quality care and support for each individual. Since the last inspection, good leadership and management have led to improved resources to support pupils' progress in reading and the creation of a varied curriculum for the teaching of writing. As a result, pupils who left the school at the end of Year 4 in 2008 made exceptional progress in these areas of their learning. The school regularly canvases pupils and their parents about how aspects of the school's work can be improved. This, together with strong links made in the immediate and wider locality, contributes well to community cohesion. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked as they move through the school and this information is used well to amend future provision. However, monitoring is not rigorous enough to ensure that new initiatives have a consistently good impact on the progress which pupils make. Governance is satisfactory overall. Although governors play a valuable part in the school's drive for improvement they have not met the statutory requirement to ensure that Nursery children are led by a school teacher at all times. Nevertheless, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and their safety and security is given close attention.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	3
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

6 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Whittingham Church of England First School, Northumberland, NE66 4UP

I would like to thank you for the way you welcomed me into your school. I could see that you thoroughly enjoy coming to school. You told me that coming to this school feels like you are all part of a big family. You are extremely well behaved, showing great care and respect for each other. It was good to hear how much you understand about what makes each of you unique and how keen you are to celebrate the achievements of others.

All of the adults who work in school are doing a good job in providing you with a good education. They are very caring and are always looking for ways to provide you with interesting and fun activities. This has helped you to do very well in improving your reading and writing skills. Progress is good overall although older pupils make satisfactory progress with their mathematics, they told me that they sometimes find their work too easy and would like the opportunity to try different tasks. I agree with them and I have asked the school to carefully check the work which they provide to make sure it helps these pupils to make faster progress. I have also asked your governing body to ensure that Nursery children in the early years class are always led by a school teacher.

I hope the chicks are continuing to do well and that Poppy is now fully recovered!!

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Linda Buller

Lead inspector