

Whitburn Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134512
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	328910
Inspection date	12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Gillian Salter-Smith

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	960
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Shirley Stratford
Headteacher	Miss Paula Williams
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2005
School address	Nicholas Avenue Whitburn SR6 7EX
Telephone number	0191 5293712
Fax number	0191 5295569

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- What features of pupils' learning, achievement and personal development exemplify the school's evaluation that these are outstanding?
- What features of leadership and management have resulted in significant improvements to provision and outcomes for pupils?
- How effective is the action taken by the school to promote equality, to challenge discrimination, harassment and bullying, and to improve community cohesion and pupils' personal development and well-being?

Evidence was gathered from visiting lessons, discussions with staff, pupils and governors, documents provided by the school and the responses of parents to the Ofsted questionnaire. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluations were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Of the few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, a very small number speak English as an additional language. An average proportion of pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has specialist status for mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Whitburn Church of England is an outstanding school. The school lives up to its vision and motto of 'Excellence for All'. The vision is shared by leaders, staff, governors and pupils and is firmly based on the highest expectation of every pupil's achievement, personal development and well-being. Each and every learner is considered as an individual and this principle is at the heart of all that is done. There are no limits for any pupil and the school strives hard to remove any potential barriers to success. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire are highly supportive of the work of the school.

In evaluating the first focus area for the inspection, it is clear that standards are consistently high. Pupils' achievement and their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Achievement in mathematics is particularly strong and the specialist college targets have been exceeded by considerable amounts for both mathematics and ICT. GCSE results are consistently well above average and are on an upward trend. In lessons observed, pupils made excellent progress and demonstrated confidence in their abilities to think analytically, resolve problems and engage in well reasoned discussions and debates. Pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have English as an additional language make similar progress to others, relative to their capabilities. This is because staff have a detailed knowledge of individual needs, are able to nurture talents and skills, and ensure that pupils thrive and develop confidence in themselves.

Pupils have a great enthusiasm for school and learning that is reflected in their excellent attendance and their high levels of involvement in an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities and enrichment. Behaviour is exemplary and on the day of the inspection pupils showed responsible and considerate attitudes on a very snowy day. Pupils feel safe and secure in school. Although they are aware of occasional incidents of bullying, they know they can get help to sort out problems quickly. Pupils appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and the school council has helped to improve the quality and healthiness of school meals. Pupils make a very strong contribution to the school, the local and the wider community. They take their responsibilities seriously including their involvement in staff appointments, and the school council members are consulted by governors on a number of matters such as the design of the new building. Pupils are involved in the work and activities of the parish, and they contribute to the successful partnerships with local primary schools and a local special school. The raising of considerable funds by pupils for many charities both within the United Kingdom and globally, alongside their research of related issues, give them considerable awareness and understanding of different communities. Pupils develop the confidence to explore all their personal, social and academic skills and make full use of them in many different contexts. This prepares them exceptionally well so that all pupils move on to either further education or training.

In considering the second focus area of the inspection, there is no doubt that outstanding leadership and management have assured high quality provision and outcomes for pupils. The school's capacity to improve is outstanding. The headteacher is sharply focused and relentless in her determination to bring about the school's vision for all pupils. She is supported by highly effective teams of senior and middle leaders, governors, and staff. Underlying the school's success is the strong focus on assuring high quality learning and teaching in the classroom, and the accountability of staff at all levels for the progress of their pupils. A healthy professional approach to sharing best practice in learning and teaching, and a well focused programme of professional development are supporting improvement well. As a result, the quality of teaching

and learning is outstanding. Excitement and enthusiasm for learning exudes from the teachers and is quickly taken on by the pupils. The high level of challenge, the rapid pace to lessons and the opportunities to develop independent study skills prepare pupils very well for future study. Teachers' probing and open-ended questioning reflects their secure subject knowledge and challenges pupils to think more deeply and explore ideas. Pupils appreciate the great variety of ways they learn. By working in pairs and groups they develop their thinking and understanding and they often discuss their work confidently with each other and adults. Specialist status has provided excellent resources for ICT that has brought additional stimulus and support to lessons. Pupils fully understand the purpose of lessons and know what to do to improve. They are skilled in assessing their own and each others' work and they feel this helps to develop their understanding. Teachers know the pupils very well and ensure that tasks are well matched to individual needs and prior learning. Pupils' work is marked regularly and pupils respond positively to the very useful guidance given by teachers.

Inspection of the third focus area revealed that the action taken to promote equality and community cohesion is outstanding. Assemblies, personal, social and health education, citizenship and other activities within the outstanding curriculum provide many opportunities for pupils to discuss discrimination, harassment and bullying and develop an understanding of people from backgrounds and cultures different from their own. As a result, pupils have a high level of respect for each other and each other's differences. The school's extensive local, national and international links help to ensure pupils are well aware of cultural issues and these contribute very well to cohesion within the community. Pupils appreciated the opportunity to work alongside students from Lesotho during a recent visit to the school. Excellent partnerships with other schools, external agencies and the community have greatly enriched the curriculum, supported pupils' personal development and contribute to community cohesion. The school monitors and evaluates the impact of all its activities to gauge their impact on pupils' progress and personal development.

High quality care, support and guidance ensure equality of opportunity, and are successful in meeting the needs of individual pupils, particularly those facing barriers to success. Pupils are extremely well prepared to stay safe and happy, and to be ready to learn. The school's deployment of support staff ensures that adult support is well targeted towards the greatest need. Many pupils choose to discuss concerns with staff, who support their emotional and social well being effectively. The school's pro-active approach to working with multi-agencies contributes to the high level of support. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are exceptionally rigorous and record keeping is highly effective.

What the school should do to improve further

- There are no significant areas to improve other than those already identified by the school.

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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 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/or disabilities make progress	1

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	1

The quality of provision

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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

13 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitburn Church of England School, South Tyneside,

SR6 7EX

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to me and my colleague when we visited your school. We enjoyed seeing you at work in lessons, meeting many of you and discussing your experiences of Whitburn Church of England School.

The school provides you with an outstanding quality of education. You make excellent progress because you are exceptionally keen to learn and are prepared to rise to the challenges posed by the outstanding quality teaching. As a result, you consistently reach high standards in national examinations.

You are developing into mature, thoughtful and responsible young adults. Your respect for each other and each other's differences is impressive. Your school does a great deal to help you to understand and to contribute to the local and the wider community. The contributions you make to a wide variety of charities are a credit to you all. It was good to hear how much you feel you gained from the visit of a group of students from Lesotho to your school.

The school provides highly effective care and support for you so that you all have an equal chance to succeed. Your behaviour is exemplary and your attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now excellent.

Your school is led and managed very effectively. Leaders, governors and staff are determined that the school's vision of 'Excellence for All' is a reality for each and every one of you, and that everything possible is done to help you to achieve your best.

You can play your part by keeping up your enthusiasm for learning and your impressive involvement in the extensive opportunities the school provides for you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Gillian Salter-Smith

Lead inspector (on behalf of the team)