

Wark Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122300
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	340119
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Joy Frost HMI

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	5–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Craig Moore
Headteacher	Mrs Denise Henry
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Age group	5–9
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector visited nine lessons and saw four teachers. She held meetings with staff, pupils and the chair of the governing body. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documents relating to monitoring and evaluation, pupils' progress, the single central register, and records of meetings. She also scrutinised work in pupils' books and questionnaires returned by 14 parents and carers, 13 pupils and 10 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the accuracy of the school's view of children's attainment on entry to Reception and the quality of provision for Early Years Foundation Stage pupils in a mixed key stage class
- the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics across the school
- the amount of progress pupils make across each key stage
- how teachers use assessment data to plan lessons for different ages and abilities
- how effectively the school monitors and evaluates the impact of its work.

Information about the school

Wark Church of England First School is a very small school with 35 pupils aged from five to nine years who are all of White British heritage. Pupils attend the school from a wide geographical area and around half come by bus. There are no pupils eligible for free school meals or who are at the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average but this is not statistically significant due to the very small number involved.

Pupils are taught in two classes: one covering the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and the other covering Years 3 and 4. Pupils enter the school in the Reception year. On the first day of the inspection the Year 3 and 4 class were attending an educational visit to a mathematics and science fayre.

There is a private pre-school on the site which is not managed by the governing body and the report for this school can be found separately on the Ofsted website.

There have been changes to staffing deployment over the last year with the retirement of a long-serving headteacher who had a part time teaching commitment and the appointment of a shared non-teaching headteacher who works for half of the week at this school and half at another. All teaching staff in the school work part-time, sharing classes. The school has many national awards including the International Schools award, Green Flag award and Artsmark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

'The teachers at Wark First School have exceptional commitment and provide our children with a very stable whilst stimulating environment in which to develop'. This is a comment made by one parent and the view expressed is verified by inspection findings. All staff in this good school know individual pupils outstandingly well and help and support them all to make good progress and achieve consistently above average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Reading levels by the end of Year 2 are exceptionally high and this enables pupils to learn effectively in all other areas of the curriculum. Attainment in mathematics is slightly lower than in reading and writing. The curriculum itself is varied and exciting with excellent enrichment activities which ensure that learning is meaningful and fun. This is confirmed by pupils' above average attendance and their obvious enjoyment of their time in school. Pupils cover a wide range of subjects with a creative theme and are very knowledgeable about current economic and ecological issues. Their contribution to the local, wider and global community is outstanding. The new school allotment has broadened pupils' awareness of the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and they are actively reducing their carbon footprint.

Good systems to track and record the attainment of pupils are relatively new. Nevertheless, they are enabling teachers to plan lessons which meet the needs of the majority of pupils in mixed-age classes. Sometimes activities which are set in mathematics lack challenge for the more able pupils because they are focused on age rather than ability. In mathematics lessons there is an over use of published worksheets which limits pupils' ability to apply their knowledge of calculations to solve problems. There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their quick recall of number facts during lessons.

The new headteacher has ensured that the unique ethos of the school has remained intact while introducing many new initiatives to further improve pupils' achievements. Staff are now more involved in the leadership and management of the school and have taken on their new roles and responsibilities with enthusiasm. All staff work together as a very close team and are becoming involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. However, this is still at the early stages of development and subject leaders are not yet observing learning for themselves across the school or consistently using the good data they collect to plan the next steps in learning or future improvements. Governors are very involved with the school and visit regularly to carry out their own planned monitoring weeks. They provide useful skills which have helped the school to improve health and safety and ensure that pupils are safeguarded at all times. They also ensure that discrimination is tackled in an outstanding way so that all pupils achieve

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equally well. The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate and identifies the areas for development. The improvements over the last year in developing the leadership and management of the school, alongside the consistently good and improving achievement of pupils, show that the school has a good capacity to sustain these improvements in the future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the challenge for more able pupils in mathematics, by:
 - improving their ability to develop quick instant recall of number facts in mathematics lessons
 - reducing the use of published worksheets.
- Develop the skills of middle managers in monitoring the quality of learning by:
 - embedding the new assessment systems into their subject areas and ensuring that teachers use them consistently to plan pupils' next steps in learning
 - using the good data teachers collect about pupils' performance to plan future developments in their subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In lessons observed during the inspection pupils were enthusiastic and the majority made good or better progress. Pupils' attainment when they enter Year 1 varies greatly year-on-year and is slightly above average. They make good and improving progress so that by the end of Year 2 attainment in reading and writing is well above average and in mathematics is slightly above average and has reached a plateau. This good progress is sustained across Key Stage 2 and, when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, they are attaining well above average levels in English and slightly above average in mathematics. Pupils who have a special educational need make the same good progress as other groups of pupils.

Pupils leave this school as confident young people. They are courteous, attend school regularly, are able to form lasting friendships and have developed as independent learners. Behaviour is good because reward systems are used consistently by all staff and pupils develop a good moral code from an early age. They make an outstanding contribution to their local community and the wider world through involvement in a wide range of community events and a strong partnership with a school in Tanzania. Pupils regularly exchange letters and videos and fundraise to provide tools to help set up a garden so the school can grow its own food. Pupils say they feel very safe in school and that bullying is not tolerated. This was evident in the playground where older pupils happily played with younger ones and boys and girls played together harmoniously. Pupils' understanding of other cultures and religions is underpinned by a strong Christian ethos and a tolerance of others' differences.

Pupils in this school see themselves as learners and actively participate in all that the school has to offer. This excellent attitude, alongside excellent relationships with staff,

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underpins pupils' good achievement. Classrooms are oases of calm and endeavour where pupils feel safe and secure and know that they are listened to. The whole school are members of the school council and share in making decisions about improvements to the school and playground. Most pupils have responsibilities and act as monitors: for example, giving out fruit or milk, turning off lights and taps or collecting the compost buckets after snack time. Pupils recycle a range of waste daily and their Green Flag Award is well deserved. Pupils also have links beyond the local area and abroad and make many visits; for example, to a mosque in Newcastle, to China Town to experience Chinese food and culture and to universities. They have visited the parliament in Edinburgh. Such visits have greatly improved their knowledge and understanding of community cohesion.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are outstanding. Staff treat pupils as individuals and work hard to meet their needs. Systems are in place to identify pupils who are falling behind or who need extra help and the school works well in

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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partnership with a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the right support. The staff work closely with other local small schools through the local Communication Support Service which provides support for the school.

Teaching and learning across the school is varied with satisfactory to outstanding teaching seen during the inspection. Overall, it is good and contributes to the good outcomes. There are strengths in teachers' questioning skills, in their creative approaches to developing writing across the school, and in the brisk pace and challenge for all pupils in some lessons. In a few lessons pupils sit on the carpet for too long listening to the teacher and the activities set do not always match pupils' abilities closely enough in mathematics. Teachers are in the process of trying out new methods of teaching and in some cases the impact of these is outstanding in engaging pupils and in giving them opportunities to think for themselves and devise their own learning activities. The use of formal assessment to support learning is developing well but the school is aware that this is not yet fully impacting on teachers' planning.

The curriculum is rich and exciting with many visits across the year to enrich the learning in the classroom. The school employs extra teachers and professionals to teach religious education, art, music and physical education which has impacted on pupils' attainment and enjoyment in these areas. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is developing with new interactive whiteboards in all classrooms. There is scope to further develop the use of these by pupils in lessons.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. She has developed the staff into a working cohesive team. With the support of the governing body, the leadership has revised management roles so that teachers are clear about what they need to do to improve their subject areas. All staff are involved in identifying areas for development and in writing the school improvement plan. At present this is a corporate effort and the school has plans to develop middle leaders further and give them opportunities to develop their subject leadership.

The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate and is beginning to impact across the school. Systems have been formalised and updated so that there is a shared vision and high expectations. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and there are good communication systems to keep them informed. Parents and carers have many

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opportunities to come into school and work alongside the staff; for example, in building the allotment and through concerts and community events, and they appreciate this.

The governing body is experienced and committed. Governors carry out all of their statutory duties well and have been innovative in their succession planning for the future development of the school. Developing opportunities for all pupils and setting high expectations are at the centre of their work and as a consequence their promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Boys and girls achieve equally well in all subjects and the gap between the more able and other pupils in mathematics is reducing rapidly.

The school's focus on international links and developing a global perspective has contributed greatly to pupils' good knowledge and understanding of multicultural issues and community cohesion. The school's procedures to safeguard pupils are rigorous, regularly updated and meet all statutory requirements.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

About half of parents and carers returned questionnaires and their views were very supportive of the school. They particularly felt that their children enjoyed school and that children are safe and taught to care and help each other. Parents and carers also had high praise for the work and commitment of teachers. Inspection evidence supports all of these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wark Church of England First School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 35 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	86	2	14	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	64	5	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	71	2	14	2	14	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	79	3	21	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wark Church of England First School, Hexham, NE48 3LS

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently, for taking the time to talk to me and tell me about your school. I am writing to tell you what I found. You go to a good school and some features are outstanding.

Your teachers take very good care of you and try hard to meet your individual needs. As a consequence you all care for each other very well. You told me that you feel very safe in school and that 'bullying is not tolerated' and this is excellent. I was especially impressed with how much you all know and understand about different cultures and religions and how you all act as monitors to reduce your carbon footprint: well done!

Although your school is good in many ways I have asked the headteacher and governors to make a few improvements to make it even better. I have asked them to think about the way you are taught mathematics so that those of you who learn quickly get lots of opportunities to practise your number facts and to let you work things out in your books more instead of using worksheets.

The teachers are going to use the information they collect about how well you do to plan learning which always challenges you so that you can achieve even higher standards in mathematics. They are also going to be more involved in planning what changes need to be made in their subject areas.

You can help them by continuing with your good attendance and excellent attitudes to learning. Good luck with the allotment and keep digging!

Yours sincerely

Joy Frost

Her Majesty's Inspector

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