

Inspection of a good school: Whittingham Church of England Primary School

Whittingham, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 4UP

Inspection date:

29 March 2023

Outcome

Whittingham Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Whittingham Church of England Primary School sits at the heart of the community. The small size of the school helps staff to know pupils very well. Pupils feel safe in school and know that there is a trusted adult they can speak to if they are worried. There is a welcoming and friendly atmosphere at the school. Parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) feel well supported and are happy with the progress their children make.

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. For example, one parent commented that, 'My child enjoys going to school and is excited to learn.' An enthusiasm for learning is present in all classrooms. Pupils enjoy learning and gain confidence through the well-planned activities that teachers use. Teachers have high expectations and, as a result, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities beyond the taught curriculum. These help to broaden their horizons and develop new interests. Pupils loved the recent visit from an opera company and valued their visit to a nearby concert venue. After school, pupils can choose from a range of activities including sports, choir and gardening clubs.

Pupils' views on bullying are mixed. A very small minority of pupils feel that bullying happens and, while they do report it, they feel that sometimes it is not dealt with as swiftly as they would like. Leaders are committed to listening to and understanding the views of pupils.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is ambitious. Staff have identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn in some subjects, but in others, this is not as precisely identified. In mathematics, leaders have recently revised the curriculum. Pupils

themselves recognise that the new curriculum is more engaging than the previous one. In lessons, staff are quick to assess what pupils know, and repeat important learning if necessary. This enables pupils to make strong progress. In the early years, children's learning of mathematics is strong. Children can identify numbers to 10 and their representation in many ways. Some children in the early years can add numbers together to make 10 because of the systematic approach that teachers take.

In physical education (PE), pupils practise important skills. For example, in rugby, the sports coach teaches pupils, from the early years onwards, to throw accurately before using these skills in games. Pupils show a great sense of achievement as they develop new skills. However, not all subjects have a precise focus on the knowledge that pupils need to develop. In subjects such as geography and history, pupils do complete suitable work that matches the ambitions of the national curriculum. However, they are not always supported to make clear links between the knowledge that they are learning. This is because leaders have not precisely identified the important geographical or historical skills that they want pupils to demonstrate.

Staff accurately and quickly identify pupils with SEND and ensure that these pupils get the help that they need to do well. For example, the youngest children who arrive in Nursery have speech and language needs identified promptly. As a result, appropriate interventions are put in place to ensure that these children can access their learning.

Reading has been prioritised by leaders. Children in Nursery develop their vocabulary and listening skills quickly. This is due, in part, to the language-rich curriculum that staff have planned. The teaching of phonics begins in Nursery with an introduction to sounds and opportunities to practise letter formation. All staff deliver phonics with consistency. Leaders have ensured that all staff are trained and are confident in the strategies and approaches to use. This ensures that pupils read books that are well matched to their phonic knowledge. Staff check pupils' progress often and offer support if needed. Many pupils become confident and fluent readers. Older pupils read a rich and varied collection of books. Pupils particularly enjoy the rewards attached to reading regularly. A firm favourite with pupils is the opportunity for a trip to the local book shop for hot chocolate.

Trips and activities are closely linked to learning and the locality. Key stage 1 pupils all enjoy a visit to the Grace Darling Museum, a topic that they study in history. Leaders are very aware that pupils may not be exposed to diversity due to the rural location of the school. Therefore, leaders have planned a personal development curriculum which ensures that pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils have a sound understanding of tolerance and respect. A buddy system ensures that older pupils take care of younger pupils. This promotes a caring environment and pupils take their responsibility to look after each other seriously.

Staff are positive about the support that they receive from leaders and governors. Staff are proud to work at the school and appreciate the consideration that leaders give to their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know each pupil well. This means that they can quickly spot any signs of concern. Leaders keep accurate and timely records of any safeguarding worries. Leaders use this information effectively to escalate concerns to other agencies if required.

Pupils know that they should speak to a trusted adult if anything makes them feel uncomfortable. This includes when they are working or playing online. Leaders are very aware that pupils may use the internet frequently due to the rural location of their homes. Pupils had very secure knowledge of how to keep themselves safe while using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not made clear enough the precise content they want pupils to know and revisit. As a result, pupils do not build their knowledge and skills securely in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that they identify the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn and revisit in all subjects as they progress through the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2014.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	122279
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10255889
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	N/A
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	N/A
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sandra McCormack
Headteacher	Belinda Athey
Website	www.whittinghamprimaryschool.co.uk/website
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller than average primary school.
- The number of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding is below average.
- All pupils are of white British heritage.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and PE. This involved examining curriculum plans, speaking with leaders, visiting lessons

and speaking with pupils about their work. Inspectors also listened to pupils read and spoke with teachers about the learning in the lessons they visited.

- The lead inspector also scrutinised workbooks and curriculum plans for history and geography.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority and the diocese. Inspectors also met with subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised the single central record. They considered leaders' safeguarding processes and asked staff questions to establish their understanding of these procedures. Inspectors observed pupils during playtimes and lunchtimes. They discussed safeguarding with pupils.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Jessica McKay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Deborah Ashcroft

Ofsted Inspector

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