

# Inspection of Whitley Chapel Church of England First School

Leazes Lane, Whitley Chapel, Steel, Hexham, Northumberland NE47 0HB

---

Inspection dates:	19 and 20 November 2024
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

This is a welcoming village school. Pupils are proud to be part of this school community. They are kind and considerate to each other. Pupils of all ages learn and play together well. They live out the school's values of respect, resilience and responsibility in their behaviour and attitudes. Parents and carers recognise the positive work of the school.

The school has high expectations for pupils. The curriculum ensures that pupils are well supported to meet these ambitions. Pupils take pride in their learning and are eager to share their success. Pupils do well here and feel safe.

Clear and simple school rules help pupils to learn in calm classrooms. Older pupils are strong role models for other pupils, particularly during social times. At lunchtime, older pupils support younger pupils with their lunch with pride. They help younger pupils to tidy their plates away or serve them water. Opportunities such as speaking in assembly and being on the school council support pupils to be confident.

Pupils benefit from after-school clubs such as drama, dance and board games. The school also has lunchtime clubs, such as mindfulness club, so more pupils are able to access this offer. School visits and overnight residential visits are warmly remembered by pupils.

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

The school's curriculum is broad and ambitious. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum, including wider curriculum subjects, identifies the key knowledge and skills pupils need to know during their time at school. Effective sequencing of lessons helps pupils build this knowledge over time. Pupils progress well through the curriculum. In computing, for example, pupils master important skills to help them use technology with ease. Pupils develop fluency and confidence in their mathematical skills. This starts in early years where children learn basic number facts, such as using one less and one more. Sometimes, the learning activities planned for mixed-age classes, do not provide sufficient opportunity for older pupils to deepen their learning. This means pupils cannot connect their knowledge and skills as successfully as they could.

Pupils are keen readers. This starts promptly in Reception Year. Pupils benefit from staff who use the same language and strategies to teach phonics. Pupils read widely. They have books which are well matched to their phonic knowledge. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about books they have studied such as 'The Tear Thief' by Carol Ann Duffy.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. The school recognises pupils with SEND effectively. Leaders seek advice and support from other professionals when needed in a timely way. Support and adaptations for pupils with SEND help pupils access the full curriculum offer.

The school has recently changed the school rules. Pupils are clear on what these are regardless of their age. Simple rewards and consequences are understood by staff and pupils and applied fairly. Pupils behave well. They are supportive of each other. The school has established a culture of inclusion. At breaktimes, pupils wait with patience for their peers who might want a break from the game they are playing. They make caring checks on their friends' well-being. Staff know pupils well. Pupils trust the adults who look after them. Pupils' attendance is high. They want to come to school, learn and play with their friends.

The school provides opportunities that help pupils to develop leadership skills. For example, pupils take on responsibilities such as school council or playground leaders. A well-structured personal, social and health education curriculum ensures pupils know how to stay safe in their community and online. Pupils learn about aspects such as water safety and road safety through lessons and through school visits. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of fundamental British values.

Staff are very proud to work here. They are supported with timely training opportunities to help improve their practice. Leaders consider the well-being of the school team well. Governors understand the important aspects of their role. They know the school community well. Recent work to ensure they hold leaders to account effectively is developing. Sometimes they do not have precise understanding of the school's progress and areas for future development. This limits how they can hold the school to account.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some areas of the wider curriculum, the needs of mixed-age classes are not consistently well met. Some pupils do not benefit from learning that is well matched to their needs. The school should continue to further develop the curriculum to ensure that pupils in mixed-age classes have opportunities to deepen and connect their learning as they move through the school.
- Governors' monitoring of school performance and the challenge they provide is developing. They are not clear on the impact of the school's quality of education and are not consistent in how they hold the school to account. Governors should ensure that they continue to develop their ability to offer support and challenge to fulfil their roles with more precision.

## 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	122293
<b>Local authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	10290114
<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	28
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Andrew Patterson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Angela Hayward (interim executive headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.whitleyfirst.northumberland.sch.uk">www.whitleyfirst.northumberland.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Church of England Diocese of Newcastle and has a Christian character.
- The interim executive headteacher joined the school in June 2024. They are also the headteacher at Slaley First School.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection was in November 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- The school has nursery provision for three-year-olds.
- The school offers a daily breakfast club which is run by the school.
- The does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- Inspectors spoke with the interim executive headteacher, the SEND leader and subject leads as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and computing. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and teaching assistants. They spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils read with a familiar adult. Inspectors also looked at curriculum documents and pupils' work in geography.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents informally in person and formally through responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. The views of staff were considered through the staff survey and through meetings with staff. Pupils' views were considered through meetings with pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from the governing body, the diocese and those responsible for school improvement from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classes, during breaktimes and at lunchtime.

## **Inspection team**

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Gemma Jeynes

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2024