

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Whitburn Church of England Academy

Whitburn, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR6 7EF

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 January 2025

Outcome

Whitburn Church of England Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is John Crowe. This school is part of Whitburn Church of England Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrea Tobin.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They make the most of their time in lessons and take advantage of the rich extra-curricular life of the school. The school is ambitious for pupils and encourages them to have high aspirations. For example, students in the sixth form aspire to a range of university courses and apprenticeships. The majority of pupils rise to the expectations set by the school and achieve well. This is also true for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The positive ethos and culture of the school shine through in the character of the pupils and the values they demonstrate. Pupils are friendly, welcoming and confident. They show tolerance and respect for others. Pupils behave well. Lessons are calm and pupils conduct themselves well at social times, for example in the dining room and when moving around corridors.

Pupils work very well together during lessons when there is group work. Students in the sixth form demonstrate their leadership skills through supporting younger pupils with reading or leading sports activities. Pupils of all ages engage in clubs and activities. These range from the extremely popular art and computing clubs through to football teams, which recently enjoyed success playing in the final stages of the national cup competition.

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

Pupils study a broad range of subjects at key stage 3. The key stage 4 curriculum is equally ambitious. Pupils study separate sciences, history, geography and modern foreign languages. Pupils achieve well in the English Baccalaureate subjects, such as science, modern foreign languages and the humanities. Additional options, such as sociology and Mandarin, further enrich the curriculum.

Teaching is clear and effective. Teachers challenge pupils to develop their thinking and their skills. For example, in Year 8 art, pupils can explain how they are using techniques such as colour saturation. In A-level philosophy, students can apply the theories of Bentham and Mill to modern world problems. The school has given careful consideration to what pupils will learn and when. This helps them to have the foundations needed for their GCSEs, for example in Mandarin.

Some pupils need additional support with their reading when they join the school. The school promptly identifies those who need extra help. Additional reading sessions allow these pupils to improve their reading so that they can read effectively in the wider curriculum. In most subjects, teachers check effectively that pupils have understood what has been taught. Questioning is often effective in checking what pupils know. However, in a minority of subjects, pupils do not routinely receive clear feedback and have the opportunity to reflect on and improve their work.

Pupils with SEND learn the full curriculum. Since the previous inspection, the school has made significant improvements to the provision for pupils with SEND. Pupils' SEND are identified promptly. Teachers use information about pupils' individual needs to adapt pupils' work across the curriculum effectively. Where additional expertise is needed, the school engages with external agencies. Pupils with SEND are fully involved with the life of the school and achieve well.

The rules for behaviour and conduct are clear to pupils. The vast majority follow them. Lessons proceed smoothly and uninterrupted. Behaviour around the school site is calm and orderly. Pupils get along well and enjoy positive relationships with their teachers.

Personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils in key stage 3 are taught a well-planned programme for personal, health and social education. This programme continues right through to Year 13. Topics become more developed, in an age-appropriate way. The programme is enhanced by visiting speakers and trips and visits. Pupils are well informed about healthy relationships, online safety and the importance of tolerance and inclusion. Pupils value the quality of careers education and guidance. Students in the sixth form demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the range of options open to them in the future. They are well prepared for their next steps in education, training and employment.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Their workload is well managed and they believe that the school is considerate of their well-being. The governing body has the relevant skills and training to fulfil its role. It knows the community and the school very well. It is well placed to challenge and support the school. Leaders at all levels are reflective. They

know the strengths and areas for development in school. They have maintained the standards from the previous inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and the appropriate authority)

- In a minority of subjects, assessment is not used as effectively as it could be. This means that pupils' understanding is not routinely checked and that assessment is not used consistently enough to inform future teaching. The school should ensure that assessment is used to clearly identify misconceptions and to inform future teaching.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in November 2019.

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

Unique reference number	136386
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	10346412
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,239
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	195
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrea Tobin
Principal	John Crowe
Website	www.whitburncofeacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Church of England Diocese of Durham. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in May 2019.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered provider of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation of the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders, along with a range of staff. Meetings were held with governors and a representative of the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The views of parents and carers, staff and pupils were gathered through Ofsted Parent View, pupil and staff surveys and face-to-face discussions.
- The inspectors scrutinised a variety of documents. These included safeguarding records, attendance information, support plans for pupils with SEND, the school improvement plan and behaviour records.

Inspection team

Carl Sugden, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqui Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Hassack	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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