

# Whitley Chapel Church of England First School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122293
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northumberland
<b>Inspection number</b>	327689
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mr John Heap

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	54
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Andrew Patterson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Su Adkinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Leazes Lane Whitley Chapel Steel Hexham Northumberland NE47 0HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01434 673294
<b>Fax number</b>	01434 673294

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This small first school serves a wholly White British population in a rural location. In recent times there has been an increase in the number of pupils from the nearby town of Hexham. The area has some signs of social and economic disadvantage but a below average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school provides for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery and Reception class. Older pupils are taught in two classes with more than one age group. The school has achieved several national awards.

Although the headteacher has announced her intention to retire, she has agreed to continue until a successor can be appointed.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

**Grade: 2**

This is a good school. Pupils and parents are mostly satisfied with its work and typical comments include: 'Children enjoy school, learn well' and 'I am happy with our school.' Inspection evidence supports these views and it is clear that a happy, family atmosphere is successfully fostered in the school.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Their excellent moral and social development is clearly shown in exemplary behaviour and attitudes to school and work. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and the large majority has very little absence. Attendance is average overall because of a very small number of persistent absentees. A significant strength of the good curriculum is the active fostering of pupils' excellent knowledge and understanding of leading a healthy and safe lifestyle. Pupils make an exemplary contribution to the day-to-day life of the school and the local community.

Achievement is good. After entering Year 1 with skills and abilities that are generally above average, they make good academic progress. Although standards at the end of Years 2 and 4 have to be viewed cautiously because of the small number of pupils in each year group, they are usually well above average and often high, and this picture is confirmed by results in Year 2 national tests. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more able, gifted and talented also make good progress towards their learning goals. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and highly competent basic skills equip them very well for the next stage of education.

The school provides a good education for the pupils. They learn well because the quality of teaching is good. Classrooms are lively and well resourced. Staff are helpful role-models and expect high standards of behaviour, relationships and learning. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and that they find their learning to be challenging. The curriculum is carefully planned to ensure that pupils do not repeat work, even though they are often in the same class for more than one year. Pupils are acquiring good independent learning skills and they use these skills in a range of subjects. However, opportunities to write in subjects such as history and geography are reduced by the overuse of prepared worksheets. As a result, written standards are lower than those in reading.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher works exceptionally hard to provide the challenging and happy atmosphere in the school. The biggest impact is seen in pupils' excellent personal development, good academic progress and the good guidance and support that they receive. Improvements are needed in the checks and subsequent evaluation that management makes of the quality of teaching and in ensuring that all risk assessments are updated. Governance is effective and improving. Governors are increasingly involved in checking the work of the school and they wisely use the wide range of expertise of the governing body. For example, financial skills and knowledge and understanding of the building trade.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage** **Grade: 2**

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a good start for children's education. Children enter the Nursery and Reception class with skills and knowledge that are generally above those typical for their age. They settle well, form positive relationships and make good progress. On entry to Year 1, most children meet, and many exceed, the goals set for their learning. A particular strength is their outstanding personal, social and emotional development and, in particular, their exemplary behaviour. Children are taught well and this is reflected in parents' positive views about the good learning and enjoyment provided for their children. The curriculum is stimulating. Resources are excellent and encourage children to investigate and enjoy the world around them, particularly in the extensive and well equipped outside area. This plays a large part in the good balance between children learning through play activities and those led by the teacher. There is effective leadership and management which enable staff to provide excellent support and good care.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Reduce the use of prepared worksheets so that pupils have more opportunities to produce longer pieces of writing in most subjects.
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching.
- Ensure risk assessments are rigorous and timely and action is taken to remedy any identified weaknesses.

## **Achievement and standards** **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good because the expectations of pupils are high. From above average skills and abilities at the start of Year 1, pupils make good progress and are on target to reach at least well above expected levels by the end of Year 4. Progress is best in reading and writing. Results in national tests at the end of Year 2 confirm this overall picture of consistently high standards. There is a successful focus on teaching practical mathematics skills and investigating, particularly in Year 4. As a result, pupils are increasingly using their good number and measuring skills in many subjects. Writing results in Year 2 tests have not been as high as in the other examined subjects but, compared with the national average, they have shown strong performance in recent years. Pupils often demonstrate that they have good basic skills and there is ample evidence that they are able to write extended pieces. However, their rate of progress is slowed because they do not have enough opportunities to use and develop their extended writing skills in other subjects because of an excessive use of worksheets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more able pupils make good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being** **Grade: 1**

Excellent relationships are evident throughout the school. Pupils listen carefully to each other in lessons and collaborate very well in learning and social situations. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They are very polite and friendly to

each other, staff and visitors and a typical view is 'we like school very much'. Attendance is average overall. Pupils are very clear and knowledgeable about the need to stay fit and healthy, and about the dangers of alcohol and drugs. In particular, they have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. Pupils say they feel safe and able to resolve rare disputes among themselves. The excellent programme of visits and visitors extends very successfully pupils' knowledge and understanding of their local community and the wider, more diverse, world. This is further extended through the excellent contributions to local charities, such as the heart unit of The Freeman Hospital and, more widely, the donations to the Jolaurabi School in Kenya. In lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning, concentration and delight are evident. In a Year 1 and 2 literacy lesson, pupils' explanations showed a very good understanding of letters and their sounds, and there were audible 'whoops' of interest when the teacher produced animal figures to illustrate the story they were studying.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

The good teaching and learning are warmly recognised by pupils and parents, who correctly acknowledge that effective practice leads to their children making good progress. Typically, good management ensures very few disruptions to lessons and learning. Excellent relationships and the judicious use of rewards foster a positive learning environment and pupils' thorough enjoyment of lessons. They learn well because their goals are challenging and explained clearly. Basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are taught well, learned by the pupils and used in a range of activities. For example, in a good Year 3 and 4 science lesson, pupils accurately measured out grids on the playing field so that they could conduct a fair test when 'charming' worms out of the ground. On occasions, the work set does not match the usual high expectations of pupils. For example, history tasks do not always use and develop pupils' basic skills in a challenging way. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities learn well, especially when they are well supported in small groups outside the main classroom.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 2**

The good curriculum is well matched to local needs. There is outstanding provision for pupils' personal development, particularly in social, moral and health issues and these have attracted awards, such as Activemark. There is an excellent range of enrichment activities, which include after-school clubs. In addition, there is an extensive range of visits, including ones to Beamish Open Air Museum and to the theatre to see an African play. Visitors also make a considerable contribution to pupils' learning, such as the specialist teachers for physical education and dance, and the health education mobile classroom. Academic development is well promoted. Extensive use is made of ICT to enrich many areas of the curriculum. The school is well aware that skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are improved by their use across the full range of subjects but worksheets are overused. Good use is made of mathematics skills in subjects such as science. Where necessary, the curriculum is

adapted to meet the needs of individuals, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the gifted and talented.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

Staff provide good pastoral care and value pupils and their efforts. Pupils remark on how well the teachers know and understand them. Procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare and child protection meet government requirements. However, a timely approach to conducting some risk assessments and involving the governing body in the process is not rigorous enough. For example, although most risk assessments are carefully carried out and supervision of the extensive play facilities is good, the risk assessment for the large climbing frame has not been updated. The checking of behaviour and academic achievement is robust. Attendance is checked carefully; outside agencies are involved where necessary and appropriate action is taken to deal with any issues, including the very small number of persistent absentees. Academic support and guidance are good overall. The school is able to support the full range of pupils' needs, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities for whom the good partnerships with parents and outside agencies play a full part. Teachers give good oral and written guidance. In English and mathematics, in particular, teachers use targets well to show pupils how to improve. Pupils are aware of their own personal targets. Marking is closely related to these individual learning targets and, as a result, pupils are clear about how they are doing and what they need to do next to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

The headteacher and staff effectively combine extensive teaching timetables with broad responsibilities, such as subject leadership. As a result, the school has continued to improve what it provides for the pupils. For example, the better tracking of pupils' achievements, so that the school has an increasingly clear picture of how well learners are doing. Consequently, there is a stronger emphasis on setting individual learning targets from tracking. This strong programme and other effective support for individuals ensure that all pupils benefit equally from what the school has to offer. Discrimination is absent. The school promotes community cohesion well. The strongest aspect is the work with the local community, often through the very constructive partnership with the church. The school has active involvement with two British Council projects that provide productive links with European and African schools and give staff and pupils an increasing knowledge and understanding of diverse cultures. Staff and governors know and understand the schools' strengths and weaknesses. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and the school improvement planning identifies the right priorities. However, the ways of measuring success occasionally lack a sharp focus and challenge. The school has sound capacity to improve. Effective governance is supportive and increasingly active in evaluating the work of the school, particularly in relation to pupils' achievement and standards. This is the result of extra training provided by local authority officers. In a very small number of cases, the governing body could be more active in checking on particular health and safety matters.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	<b>2</b>
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	<b>Yes</b>
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	<b>2</b>
The effectiveness of boarding provision	<b>NA</b>
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	<b>3</b>

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?</b>	<b>2</b>
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	<b>2</b>
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	<b>1</b>
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	<b>2</b>
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	<b>2</b>
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	<b>2</b>

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	<b>2</b>
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	<b>1</b>
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	<b>2</b>
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	<b>2</b>

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	<b>1</b>
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>1</b>
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	<b>1</b>
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	<b>1</b>
How well learners enjoy their education	<b>1</b>
The attendance of learners	<b>3</b>
The behaviour of learners	<b>1</b>
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	<b>1</b>
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup>Grade 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.

## The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

29 June 2009

Dear Pupils



**Inspection of Whitley Chapel Church of England First School,  
Northumberland, NE47 0HB**

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for the thoroughly enjoyable and busy time we spent in your school recently. Your warm welcome, courtesy and help were much appreciated. The following are some of the main findings about your good school.

We particularly liked the good progress you make throughout the school. This means that you achieve well above average results in the tests taken at the end of Year 2 and high standards in your work at the end of Year 4. Your personal development is first class because you show excellent behaviour and attitudes to school and work. The contribution that you make to the local community and those further afield is exemplary, for instance through your fundraising and charitable donations. You tirelessly and willingly help and care for each other and make a full contribution to the life of your school. As a result, there is a happy, safe and family atmosphere there. You greatly benefit from the good teaching and learning and excellent range of activities that promote your good academic progress. All of these strengths are promoted by the good leadership and management provided by the staff. You and your parents told the inspectors quite clearly that you are pleased with what the school does for you.

To make your school even better, we have asked your teachers to:

- give you fewer prepared worksheets so that you have more opportunities to do longer pieces of writing
- make sure that the checks they do on the quality of teaching and any safety risks are carefully and more regularly carried out. The large climbing frame would be a good example.

I know that you will want to play a full part by following your teachers' advice and guidance very closely by continuing to use and develop your skills, knowledge and understanding.

Very best wishes and good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

John Heap  
Lead inspector