

Inspection of Wheatley Hill Community Primary School

Wheatley Hill, Durham DH6 3RQ

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 October 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to this welcoming school. Pupils of all abilities prosper in the nurturing environment. Many pupils move into the school to access the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) provision. Pupils with SEND settle in quickly and experience success in school, often joining lessons in the mainstream classes. They receive a high level of support from specialist staff. Excellent relationships develop between staff and pupils. As a result, pupils are confident and safe in school.

Pupils' behaviour at Wheatley Hill is exemplary. All staff have high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. Staff teach pupils how to manage their feelings and be kind to one another. There are established routines that give structure to the school day. The learning environment is thoughtfully designed. Pupils have designed spaces and suitable resources to reduce their anxiety and help them to learn. The classrooms are calm and pleasant places to be.

Staff are rightly proud of the exceptional physical education offer. All pupils learn to swim at an early age so that they can take part in sailing activities throughout their time in school. Pupils learn social and life skills through forest school, which they then transfer to camping. Pupils relish the opportunities for outdoor education.

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

Leaders have implemented an ambitious curriculum that helps pupils develop a strong sense of local identity. The geography and history curriculums include educational visits and visitors to school. History comes to life for pupils on their visits to museums and places of interest. In geography, pupils explore the local coastline. As a result, pupils are excited by these subjects and have excellent recall of their learning. They are adept in identifying both artificial and natural physical coastal features. Pupils are eager to learn more about the heritage of Wheatley Hill and County Durham.

Pupils are less keen on reading than learning about local history. Leaders ensure that there is a structured approach to teaching pupils to read. Year 6 pupils read fluently and accurately. Reading support for younger children is less effective and is not helping the weaker readers catch up quickly enough. Although the school provides access to a wide variety of high-quality texts, pupils do not embrace these opportunities. Pupils are not taught to recognise the value of books, and many books are lost at home. There are few incentives to read at home and parents and carers lack guidance in supporting their child in reading.

Children in early years are visibly happy in school. Leaders create an indoor environment that is inviting and well designed to support children in their learning. Adults model communication and language skills well. Children develop positive attitudes towards learning that continue throughout school.

Leaders have highly effective systems to support pupils with SEND. They ensure that staff are well prepared to meet the needs of pupils with complex SEND who transfer from other schools. Staff use a wide range of strategies to support pupils in accessing learning. These include additional prompts, such as pictorial instructions, and practical resources. Pupils with SEND are fully included in the wider life of the school. They experience camping in the Lake District and join the residential visits to Europe.

Pupils understand that everyone comes to school to learn. There is no low-level disruption in class. All pupils benefit from an organised physical activity of their choice at lunchtime. They settle back to afternoon studies very quickly. Leaders work with families to highlight the importance of coming to school. They provide transport for many families. This has improved attendance, which is higher than pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels.

Leaders promote positive mental health. Each child is welcomed into school with a smile and a 'check in' by staff who know them well. Some pupils benefit from counselling sessions provided by external therapists. There are various after-school clubs, including for sports and phonics catch-up. The school choir performs at the nearby residential home. Pupils grow in confidence in their various leadership roles.

The governing body acknowledges that some leadership structures and processes need to change in line with the school's increasing size. The clarity that informs the work of subject leaders does not extend to phase leaders. Governors lack some of the skills they need, such as in accountancy and finance, to make effective strategic decisions. Sometimes, governors do not receive the information they need to hold others to account for the quality of the school's work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not receive the help they need to become fluent readers. In addition, the school is not taking effective action to encourage a love of reading among all pupils. These leaves some pupils at a disadvantage. The school should ensure that all staff develop pupils' fluency in reading. The school should also consider how it can support a wider love of reading, such as by offering greater support to parents to help them to encourage their child to read at home.
- Governors and phase leaders do not have the information, structures and skills to check the effectiveness of provision in their areas of responsibility. This means that their oversight is sometimes limited. The school should clarify leadership roles and lines of accountability. This will enable governors and phase leaders to better hold others to account.

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	114147
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10307022
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	424
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vikki Wynn
Headteacher	Alan Scarr
Website	www.whprimary.com
Date of previous inspection	2 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school has a local authority resourced provision for pupils with speech, language and communication needs.
- The school supports 90 pupils who have education, health and care plans.
- The school operates Nursery provision for two-year-old children in the local community centre.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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

This was the first routine inspection the school had 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.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. Meetings were also held with the early years leader, subject leaders, class teachers and pupils. Further meetings were held with early career teachers and some support staff.
- The lead inspector also met with representatives from the local authority and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, English, mathematics, geography and history. For each deep dive, inspectors looked at curriculum planning, conducted joint lesson visits with leaders, spoke to pupils about their work and looked at books and samples of pupils' work.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, around the school and at playtime and lunchtime. They spoke with pupils about their views of the school and their learning, behaviour and safety.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke to staff, parents and governors. A range of safeguarding information was scrutinised, including the school's policies and records. Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed relationships between pupils and adults. The lead inspector also met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- An inspector visited the school-run Nursery provision for two-year-old children at the nearby community centre.
- As well as speaking to parents at the school gate, inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were taken into account through a number of meetings as well as their responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Mary Cook, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Deborah Ashcroft	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Gordon	His Majesty's Inspector
Vic Good-Bruce	Ofsted Inspector

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