

# Whitfield CofE Primary School

**Address:** Whitfield, Hexham, Northumberland, NE47 8JH

**Unique reference number (URN):** 144478

## Inspection report: 27 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	● ● ●
Needs attention	● ● ● ●
Urgent improvement	

### ✔ **Safeguarding standards met**

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

#### **How we evaluate safeguarding**

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

## Expected standard

### Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils' regular attendance and daily punctuality are given the very highest priority by leaders, including trustees. Leaders' expectations of pupils' attendance are explained fully to parents and carers prior to their child's admission. Reminders about the importance of regular attendance are included in the school's newsletters. As a result of strategies to improve attendance, whole-school attendance has increased year on year. Currently, the attendance of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 is well above the most recent national average. Their younger friends in the early years attend equally well. There are no pupils who are persistently absent. Typically, pupils arrive at school in time for their breakfast or lessons.

Pupils behave well in lessons and during the less-structured times of the school day. On occasion, when the set tasks are not sufficiently challenging, there is some low-level disruption in lessons. Pupils are positive about how effectively the school deals with the very rare instances of poor behaviour. Pupils understand the school's 'golden rules' and think they are fair. They are motivated by the recognition and rewards they receive for following these rules. The school is a calm and orderly place of learning.

### Inclusion

Expected standard 

Whitfield CofE Primary is an inclusive school that supports pupils who face barriers to their learning and wellbeing successfully. Leaders have great aspirations for pupils and provide a safe, nurturing environment to help them to flourish. They work closely with parents, carers and a range of professionals to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and other disadvantaged pupils, get the support they need, when they need it.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. Staff are trained appropriately to help pupils overcome any barriers to their learning. The school uses suitable strategies, appropriate adaptations and a range of resources to ensure that pupils access the curriculum fully. Leaders check pupils' progress closely and regularly. Leaders and staff plan and implement any further adjustments needed. Typically, pupils with SEND and those eligible to receive additional funding make clear progress from their starting points. Leaders recognise the need to provide further academic support at times.

The school's pupil premium strategy is well informed so that additional funding is allocated well. This generally has a positive impact on pupils, particularly in relation to the support they receive for their social development and emotional wellbeing.

### Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school prioritises pupils' personal development and wellbeing. Leaders check that pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, benefit from all the school has to offer. Pupils learn a carefully considered curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and age-appropriate relationships, sex and health education. They learn about, for example, what makes a good friend, the different types of relationships and how to keep themselves safe

online. Pupils typically have a secure understanding of fundamental British values, such as democracy. They are knowledgeable about different world faiths. Pupils are curious and show a keen interest in finding out about people who lead different lives to themselves. Pupils' knowledge of diversity comes through PSHE, the different books they read, visitors from faiths other than Christianity and visits to places of worship.

Pupils value the opportunities they are given to develop their confidence, resilience and teamwork skills. For example, pupils appreciate how residential visits and outdoor adventurous activities encourage them to try new things and take appropriate risks. Other visits, such as to the theatre and museums, support pupils' cultural development well.

Staff encourage pupils to develop their sense of awe and wonder in the school's surrounding area of outstanding natural beauty. In the early years, children's imagination is nurtured through bug hunts and immersive reading of stories such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' in the nearby woodland. Older pupils cook outdoors. The eco-council takes responsibility for tending the school gardens and growing produce to use at the community garden party.

The school supports pupils with their mental health and wellbeing successfully. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. They are taught to recognise and manage their emotions. Carefully tailored support for wellbeing is put in place for those pupils who need it.

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## Needs attention ●

### Achievement

Needs attention ●

Published data indicates pupils' attainment is too low in the Year 1 phonics screening check, the Year 4 multiplication tables check and at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6. Over time, pupils do not make sufficient progress from their starting points.

Pupils are making better progress in reading currently. They respond to reading tasks accurately. The standard of their writing is improving too. Some pupils' progress in writing is hampered by poor letter formation. Pupils' rapid recall of multiplication facts is improving. They are applying their knowledge of number increasingly well to solve problems.

Leaders acknowledge that gaps in pupils' knowledge are closing, but not fast enough. Pupils are not prepared well enough for the next stage in their education.

### Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

Pupils do not learn to read early enough. Most recently, too many did not achieve the standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Staff do not deliver the school's phonics scheme consistently well. In phonics lessons, adults and pupils sometimes pronounce sounds incorrectly.

Pupils' poor letter and number formation is not addressed and corrected consistently well. Other essential skills, such as spelling, are not promoted as they should be. On occasion, adults' expectations of pupils are not high enough.

Leaders have an informed view of the quality of teaching and the curriculum in this very small school. Their understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development is accurate. Quite correctly, the delivery of the English and mathematics curriculums is a whole-school improvement priority.

In the autumn term of the current academic year, leaders implemented a new curriculum for the foundation subjects such as history, art and design and computing. This curriculum is being adjusted to meet the needs of mixed-age classes of pupils. Pupils' subject-specific vocabulary is improving in the subjects where the new curriculum is more embedded. However, the computing curriculum does not prepare pupils in Year 6 well enough for computer science lessons in secondary school.

## Early years

Needs attention 

On occasion, children do not have access to the correct writing tools, such as chubby pencils. They are unable to hold slimmer pencils with a correct pencil grip. Their mark making, including letter and number formation, suffers. The provision for early reading is not strong enough. Phonics sessions lack pace. Adults and children do not pronounce letter sounds correctly.

The early years curriculum is new and not embedded. Activities are planned to address gaps in children's knowledge and skills. For example, children's fine motor skills are developed well when they use tweezers to sort materials.

Leaders have improved the curriculum for writing to ensure a clear progression and sequence of knowledge and skills between the early years and key stage 1. There is no discernible impact from this recent initiative.

Relationships between the school's staff, the children and their parents and carers are strong in early years. Staff show exceptional care and attention to vulnerable children, including children who have just started to attend. Transition into the setting for new Nursery-aged children is seamless. They are calm on entry and quickly become immersed in the activities on offer. Typically, staff develop children's language and communication skills well. Oral health is promoted at the toothbrush station.

## Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Overall, the school's leaders, including at governance level, have not acted with sufficient speed to improve pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. That said, leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's context. Contextual barriers, such as the remote location of the school, are addressed innovatively. For example, in physical education lessons, some sporting activities are streamed online to enable the pupils to compete against other schools.

Trustees and members of the local governing body have a sound understanding of the school's provision for vulnerable pupils. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders' school improvement plans address the areas that need further development incisively. For example, staff training on teaching the school's phonics scheme in mixed-age classes is scheduled for this term.

Trustees and members of the local governing body prioritise leaders' and staff's workload and wellbeing in this small school, where individuals carry out many roles. The trust's chief executive officer supports the newly appointed headteacher well by working in the school one day each week.

The school is the beating heart of the local community. Leaders, including governors, have forged extremely productive relationships with members of the local community. For example, a local architect drew up the plans for the woodland classroom, and another local resident constructed the building. Leaders work cooperatively with appropriate local authorities to attend training and when making referrals to children's services.

## **What it's like to be a pupil at this school**

Pupils who attend this small village school are part of a warm, kind and welcoming community. They smile happily and share their overnight news with staff as they are greeted by name at the school's front door each morning. Pupils behave extremely well. They trust staff to deal with any unusual incidents of unkind behaviour quickly and well. Pupils attend school regularly and arrive on time. They enjoy attending the school's breakfast and after-school clubs.

Every pupil knows the name of every other pupil who attends the school. Firm friendships are formed between pupils in all year groups. Pupils support each other well. All, from the youngest in early years to the oldest in Year 6, sing with gusto and harmony when they come together every day. Pupils undertake roles of responsibility willingly. They are highly effective eco-councillors, sports leaders, school councillors and collective worship organisers.

The school knows its pupils and their families well. Relationships between school and home are strong. Pupils' individual needs are identified quickly. The school makes referrals to services, such as occupational therapy, in a timely manner.

Pupils, who are all Whitfield environmentalists, understand the meaning of sustainable energy. They look forward to their lessons in the school's new woodland classroom. This outdoor learning initiative is one of leaders' current actions to improve the school's curriculum offer and boost pupils' attainment and progress. Some pupils do not achieve as well as they should in reading, writing and mathematics. Children's basic skills, such as pencil grip and letter formation, are not developed sufficiently well by the time they leave the early years.

Parents and carers are happy with the standard and regularity of the school's communication with them. They feel well informed about their child's progress. One, echoing

the views of many, said, 'Our children are valued, listened to in class and taught with care and compassion.'

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## Next steps

- Leaders should make sure that all staff have high expectations of what children in the early years can do. They should make sure that learning activities provide children with sufficient challenge, especially in the acquisition of the knowledge and foundational skills needed to become fluent early readers and legible early writers.
  - Leaders should ensure that improving the attainment and progress of pupils in key stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is of the very highest priority and that the impact of the recently implemented improvement initiatives is evaluated incisively and regularly.
  - Leaders should check carefully that their strategies to improve the core and foundation subject curriculums, including by raising the expectations of all staff, are having the intended impact.
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## About this inspection

This school is part of The Good Shepherd Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Claire Render, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Peter James Ballard.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the trust's CEO, the diocesan director of education, the chair of the local governing body and the chair of trustees during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Church of England religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection, for schools with a religious character, took place in June 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place in 2026.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. The executive headteacher left at the end of the 2025 summer term. The headteacher took up post at the beginning of the 2025 autumn term.

The school does not make use of alternative provision.

**Lead inspector:**

Belita Scott, Ofsted Inspector

**Team inspector:**

Dan McKeating, His Majesty's Inspector

## Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 27 January 2026

## School and pupil context

### Total pupils

**19**

Well below average

### What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

### School capacity

**56**

Well below average

### What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

### Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

**0.00%**

Well below average

**What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

**Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan**

**0.00%**

Well below average

**What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

**Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support**

**21.05%**

Above average

**What does this mean?**

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

**Location deprivation**

**Below average**

**What does this mean?**

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

**Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)**

**No resourced provision**

## What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

## All pupils' performance

### Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	56%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	S	62%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	61%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

### Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	67%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	S	75%	S
2023/24 (final)	S	74%	S
2022/23 (final)	S	73%	S

### Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>	56%	72%	Below
<b>2024/25 (revised)</b>	S	72%	S
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	S	72%	S
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	S	71%	S

### **Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics**

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>	67%	73%	Below
<b>2024/25 (revised)</b>	S	74%	S
<b>2023/24 (final)</b>	S	73%	S
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	S	73%	S

'S' in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

### **Disadvantaged pupils' performance**

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

#### **Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		46%	
<b>2024/25</b>		47%	
<b>2023/24</b>		46%	
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	S	44%	S

### **Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		62%	
<b>2024/25</b>		63%	
<b>2023/24</b>		62%	
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	S	60%	S

### **Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing**

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

<b>Year</b>	<b>This school</b>	<b>National average</b>	<b>Compared with national average</b>
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		59%	
<b>2024/25</b>		59%	
<b>2023/24</b>		58%	
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	S	58%	S

## Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average		60%	
2024/25		61%	
2023/24		59%	
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

'S' in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

## Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

## Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		68%	
2024/25		69%	
2023/24		67%	
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

## Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		80%	
2024/25		81%	
2023/24		80%	
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

## Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average		78%	
2024/25		78%	
2023/24		78%	
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

## Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
<b>Latest 3 year average</b>		80%	
<b>2024/25</b>		81%	
<b>2023/24</b>		79%	
<b>2022/23 (final)</b>	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

## Absence

### Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
<b>2024/25 (2 term)</b>	7.4%	5.2%	Above
<b>2023/24 (3 term)</b>	16.9%	5.5%	Above
<b>2022/23 (3 term)</b>	8.3%	5.9%	Above

### Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
<b>2024/25 (2 term)</b>	21.1%	13.3%	Above
<b>2023/24 (3 term)</b>	45.5%	14.6%	Above
<b>2022/23 (3 term)</b>	10.0%	16.2%	Below

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## Our grades explained

### Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

### Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

### Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

### Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

### Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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