

Inspection of Whitehills Primary School

Acre Lane, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN2 8DF

Inspection dates:	25 and 26 February 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since April 2015.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are keen to come to school each day because there is always something to look forward to. They are safe and well cared for by staff. Pupils get on well with staff and with each other. Bullying happens rarely. Pupils said that they can rely on staff to deal with any incidents before they escalate. They rightly reported that behaviour seldom affects their learning.

Pupils achieve well and enjoy collecting 'pom-poms' for going over and above in their work and behaviour. Typically, they rise to the school's high academic expectations. However, these high expectations are not consistently realised for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils understand the importance of respect for people who are different from themselves. One pupil echoed the views of many when he said that 'it's sad' if people do not uphold the values of respect and tolerance. Pupils enact these values through taking on leadership opportunities. They can join the school council or become playground buddies. They raise money for the food bank and visit a local hospice. These responsibilities help pupils to develop resilience and strength of character. They prepare older pupils well for the transition to secondary school.

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

The school has refined the curriculum. It is ambitious and typically starts in the early years. There are regular opportunities for pupils to revisit important themes, concepts and skills. Teachers check pupils' understanding of these regularly. They pick up on any misconceptions that pupils might have. In a few subjects the curriculum is new. The systems to check pupils' learning are not fully developed. This makes it difficult for teachers to know exactly what pupils understand and remember in these subjects.

The school is ambitious for pupils with SEND to achieve well. It identifies pupils' individual SEND needs. However, the school does not have strong systems in place to check that the quality of education for pupils with SEND is suitable. Typically, this means that staff do not have clear enough information on how to support the increasing numbers of pupils with SEND in the school.

The in-class support that staff provide is not consistently effective. On occasion, staff make helpful adaptations to enable pupils with SEND to access the curriculum. They provide useful resources to support pupils' learning. At other times, pupils with SEND are not provided with suitably challenging learning activities. This can hamper their ability to work independently and means that these pupils do not achieve as well as they might. The targets set for pupils with EHC plans are not consistently broken down into manageable, achievable steps.

Reading is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils get off to a strong start in phonics from the very beginning of the Reception Year. Staff access training to ensure they deliver the phonics programme with fidelity. Staff check pupils' progress regularly. They group

pupils according to the stage of their phonics learning. The school provides effective additional help to pupils who need it. These pupils become more confident in using phonics strategies to break down sounds and blend them into words. Pupils take home a book each week that matches their phonics stage, as well as a library book. This enables them to practise and apply their phonics knowledge.

Pupils enjoy reading for pleasure. They value daily class reading and regular visits to the school library. Pupils are keen to receive the weekly 'Library star' award as well as reading certificates. The early years environment provides many spaces for pupils to engage with books. Younger children get extra support with their reading from an older 'reading buddy.'

Ordinarily, pupils behave well and engage with their learning. They understand the school's behaviour expectations. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Rates of attendance are high. The school engages sensitively with families when this is not the case. Together they remove any barriers to attendance.

Pupils experience a well-planned personal, social and health education curriculum. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness. Pupils visit local places of worship such as the gurdwara. They go on outings to the theatre. Children in the early years and pupils in Year 1 visit the farm and a local museum. In addition, pupils take part in a range of clubs and sporting events. They all learn to play musical instruments such as the clarinet. Pupils in Year 4 and Year 6 participate in residential trips which help to develop their team-building skills.

Staff enjoy being part of a team at the school. They appreciate the consideration given to their workload and well-being. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and meet often to discuss some aspects of its work. They use their visits to assure themselves of the quality of education. However, governors have not worked quickly enough with leaders to address inconsistencies in provision for pupils with SEND.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not have well-established systems in place to check that the quality of education is suitable for the increasing numbers of pupils with SEND. This lack of oversight impacts on pupils' day-to-day experience of the curriculum because it is not systematically reviewed and adapted as needed. The school should strengthen its systems to plan and review provision for pupils with SEND. This will ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged and supported to access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

- The school does not provide staff with consistently clear and up-to-date information about how best to support pupils with SEND. This is a factor in a number of pupils with SEND not achieving as well as they could. The school should make sure that staff receive clear information and regular updates on how to support all pupils with SEND, train staff in how to use this information and monitor how well pupils achieve as a result.
- In some foundation subjects, the systems to assess pupils' learning are not fully developed. This makes it difficult for teachers to check precisely what pupils know and remember in these subjects. As the curriculum embeds, the school should ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of how to check what pupils have learned in each of the foundation subjects and to use this information to inform future planning.

How can I feedback 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	121926
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10375478
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Ward-Stokes
Headteacher	Natalie James
Website	www.whitehillsprimary.northants.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 April 2015 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been a change of headteacher since the previous inspection.
- The school uses one unregistered 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.
- Inspectors met with leaders in the school, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator, in addition to the staff responsible for the quality of education, behaviour, attendance, personal development, safeguarding and early years.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body. They also spoke to representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into computing, early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, inspectors spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- 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 inclusive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed staff, parent and pupil responses to Ofsted's surveys, including Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

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