

Inspection of NCEA William Leech CofE Primary School

Church Square, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 5TR

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Amy Thompson. This school is part of Northumberland Church of England 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), Alan Hardie, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Brearley.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is the heart of the community. Pupils are proud to attend here. They describe it as a welcoming place to learn. The school knows the community it serves well.

Pupils benefit from an ambitious curriculum that supports their academic progress as well as providing them with a range of other opportunities beyond the classroom. This is well matched to the needs of pupils who attend here. Pupils rise to the high expectations set by leaders and staff at both the school and the trust.

The school is ambitious for all pupils who attend here. Simple, clear and effective school rules ensure that pupils behave well. Trust values, such as hope and inclusivity, can be seen in the attitudes of pupils across school. Pupils feel safe. They value the care and support the school staff provide for them every day.

Outside of classroom learning, pupils experience a range of opportunities. Termly visits to museums, for example, bring the curriculum to life. Leadership opportunities, such as 'LIGHT' ambassadors, house captains and mentors, all help pupils to be active citizens and understand aspects of democracy.

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

Leaders focus on raising aspirations and ensuring pupils here are ready for their next steps in learning. They have developed a curriculum that is suitably ambitious for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school prioritises reading for all pupils. Leaders know that being able to read unlocks the rest of the curriculum. Pupils make a bright start to learning to read. Children in early years are well supported to recognise important sounds so that they are ready for formal phonics teaching in Reception Year. Well-trained staff teach phonics with consistency. Pupils benefit from familiar routine and language. They use and apply the sounds they know very well. As pupils move through school, they enjoy reading a range of books both individually and in class. The reading curriculum is helping pupils to improve their writing.

The school has a range of mixed-age classes. Leaders have adapted the curriculum to reflect this unique setting. This starts in the early years. In some subjects the curriculum is carefully adapted to meet the needs of mixed-age classes. This ensures that pupils make small steps of progress in an effective way. This can be seen when pupils talk about their previous mathematics learning, for example. They know how previous work is helping them with their current learning about perimeter. In a small number of subjects this is less clear. The knowledge and skills that pupils should gain over time are less defined. This leads to pupils in multiple year groups occasionally working towards the same objectives and outcomes.

Pupils with SEND benefit from high-quality support across the school day. The school makes effective use of specialist staff to support pupils' needs, such as those linked to speech and language. Carefully considered adaptations and resources help remove barriers to learning. Dedicated spaces around school and supportive staff help pupils get back on track with learning quickly if they become dysregulated. This support starts with the youngest children in school. Staff in the Reception and Nursery classes promptly identify any additional needs children may have. They use the support of other professionals where needed.

The school effectively extends its ambition for all pupils through a wide range of extra-curricular experiences. Pupils enjoy overnight camps at Beamish Museum and local walks to the coast. The personal, social and health education curriculum helps pupils understand their emotions, stay physically and mentally healthy and recognise healthy relationships. Pupils' understanding of protected characteristics is a beacon to other schools. Pupils benefit from additional learning linked to staying safe in their community. This includes water and rail safety. A planned careers offer is broadening pupils' horizons. Pupils know about a range of different careers, including working as a flight attendant or at a veterinary practice.

Pupils are positive about school life and learning. They are keen to celebrate their achievements. Pupils focus well on their work and pupils are rarely distracted. Routines and expectations for behaviour start in early years. The relationships between staff and pupils are warm and caring. Staff know and understand pupils well. Attendance of pupils is improving. The school has clear procedures to monitor and support families with attendance.

Those responsible for governance, including trustees, play an active part in school life. Local governors know the school well. They all share the same vision for the pupils who attend here. Staff are well supported by the school. They are proud to work here.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the skills and knowledge that pupils should gain are not precise enough to reflect the mixed-age curriculum that has been developed. Some pupils do not have learning objectives and/or targets closely matched to where they are in their learning journey. This impacts the progress they make. The school should refine the end points for these subjects, to better reflect the mixed-age classes in school, and ensure that assessment informs the school how pupils are building their knowledge and skills over time.

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	148764
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10323145
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Brearley
Headteacher	Amy Thompson
Website	williamleech.ncea.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust. It joined the trust in September 2021.
- The school is a member of the Church of England Diocese of Newcastle and has a Christian character.
- The school has not previously had a section 48 inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative educational providers.
- The school offers a breakfast club.
- The school has a nursery and this includes provision for two-year-olds.

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 received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, and art and design. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and teaching assistants. They spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils read with a familiar adult.
- 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.
- Inspectors gathered views of parents informally in person and formally through responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. The views of staff were considered through the staff survey and through meetings with them. Pupils' views were considered through pupil meetings.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from the trust, including the CEO, trustees and members of the local governing body and the diocese.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classes, at breakfast club and during breaks and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andrew James

Ofsted Inspector

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