

Inspection of Whale Hill Primary School

Sandsend Road, Eston, Middlesbrough TS6 8AD

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 October 2021

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

Ofsted has not previously inspected Whale Hill Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Whale Hill Primary School to be outstanding, before it opened as Whale Hill Primary School as a result of conversion to academy status. From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened in Whale Hill Primary School's effectiveness before it closed. Changes in the effectiveness of Whale Hill Primary School may have happened at any point since it opened.

What is it like to attend this school?

Whale Hill is a very tightly knit school community. One pupil said, 'This school is a family. We look after each other.' Secure relationships between staff and families are based on trust. Parents and carers are extremely loyal to the staff. They appreciate the lengths that leaders, teachers and teaching assistants went to during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep families safe.

The school's rules are fully embedded. All pupils understand why good behaviour matters. They know the importance of regular attendance. Pupils want to come to school and try their best. They want to achieve. They aspire to get a good job when they grow up.

Leaders are ambitious too. They have designed the curriculum skilfully. The curriculum is well sequenced. As a result, pupils can remember what they have learned.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. Pupils are polite and sensible when moving around the school building. This makes the learning environment feel calm and safe. Instances of bullying are very rare. When they do occur, staff manage them effectively.

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

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum for all subjects. Teachers assess pupils' learning regularly. They know pupils' starting points for each new topic. Teachers quickly build on pupils' prior learning. Teachers analyse assessments skilfully to identify any learning gaps. They adapt the curriculum to repeat learning if they need to.

Teachers adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils and their parents give their views when the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) applies for an initial statutory assessment and during the annual review process for education, health and care plans (EHC plan). The SENCo checks that teachers are using the targets that have been agreed within each EHC plan. This is helping pupils with SEND to make good progress.

The early years curriculum is sharply focused on developing pupils' vocabulary and communication skills. Some staff have extra skills that help them communicate with non-verbal children with SEND. Some teachers and teaching assistants use Makaton or British sign language confidently to help children understand instructions. This reduces children's frustration and helps them with their learning.

Phonics is taught right from the start. Teachers know the phonics milestones that pupils should reach. They make sure that pupils keep up with the pace of the phonics programme. Leaders have identified that some of the reading books in Year

1 do not match pupils' phonics knowledge. Leaders know that this is holding some less-able pupils back. Governors have already allocated the funds that leaders need to buy some new reading books.

Pupils have a mature understanding of bullying. It hardly ever happens. Inspectors spoke to Year 6 pupils who have been given sanctions under the school's behaviour policy. Pupils understood why they deserved these sanctions. They say teachers always treat them fairly. Pupils say the sanctions worked because their behaviour has improved. Pupils are very keen to keep this up.

The curriculum for pupils' personal development is very effective. Pupils are respectful and tolerant of others, including those from different faiths and cultures. For example, pupils know what atheists, agnostics and Hindus believe in. They know that racism is a criminal offence. They understand equality. One pupil said, 'You shouldn't judge people for having a disability or two mams.'

The financial literacy leader has improved pupils' economic education. Leaders receive food from supermarkets through the 'FareShare' project. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 run an 'eco-shop.' Leaders are in the process of setting up a school bank. All pupils will be able to open a savings account. Leaders are preparing pupils well for their lives at secondary school and beyond.

Leaders raise pupils' aspirations through careers education. They take older pupils to visit the local college to find out about the different types of training courses on offer. Some pupils learned how to make bricks when they sampled the bricklaying course. Other pupils are attracted to jobs in the travel and tourism industry. Pupils found out about jobs that they did not know existed. Preparation for adulthood is well established at Whale Hill Primary School.

Leaders are providing effective professional development and support for early career teachers. Leaders have ensured that mentors are given the time they need to be effective in their roles. All staff are positive about leaders' management of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders understand how to identify, help and manage safeguarding concerns. Staff are well trained. Leaders make sure that early career teachers receive safeguarding training as a priority during their induction.

Pupils trust adults in school. They confidently approach adults and talk to them about their problems. Pupils feel that their problems are taken seriously. Pupils can go to the 'zen-den' if they need support at lunchtime.

Governors have arranged supportive meetings that reduce stress for designated safeguarding leads. This involves designated safeguarding leads, from each school within the multi-academy trust, attending half-termly sessions together.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Reading books are not well matched to pupils' phonics knowledge in Year 1 consistently. As a result, some pupils cannot read these books fluently. This knocks their confidence. Leaders should ensure that reading books are well matched to pupils' phonics knowledge and skills.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	147393
Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	10199283
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	505
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jane Powell
Headteacher	Sandra Marsden
Website	www.whalehillprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Whale Hill Primary School converted to become an academy on 1 September 2019, joining the Steel River Academy Trust.
- Two co-headteachers led the school together until August 2021. The current headteacher was one of the co-headteachers. She became the single, full-time headteacher in September 2021.
- The recently retired co-headteacher has been appointed as a trustee.
- The chief executive officer left the multi-academy trust in September 2020. Trustees restructured the senior executive team and removed this post from the leadership structure. Two executive officers now share the responsibilities previously held by the chief executive officer.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- Leaders have selected the UCL Institute of Education as the early career teacher training provider.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Members of the inspection team met the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the SENCo and the early years leader. Leaders with responsibility for pupil premium funding, pupils' mental health and pupils' personal, social, health and economic education also met inspectors. Inspectors met several curriculum leaders in face-to-face and online meetings.
- The chair and vice-chair of the local governing body met inspectors. The vice-chair of the local governing body is also a trustee. Inspectors met one of the two senior executive officers of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and phonics, mathematics, history, geography and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Members of the inspection team evaluated a range of documentation, including minutes of meetings of the board of trustees, and leaders' plans for the use of pupil premium and COVID-19 recovery premium funding.
- Inspectors met the SENCo to evaluate the quality and impact of EHC plans for pupils with SEND. Inspectors visited lessons with the SENCo to observe several pupils with SEND in different year groups and subjects. Inspectors selected three pupils with SEND, who have EHC plans, and spoke to their parents by telephone.
- Early career teachers met inspectors to discuss their induction training and leaders' support for their workload. Inspectors evaluated the quality and impact of the induction programme against the standards outlined in the early career framework.
- Senior designated safeguarding leads shared safeguarding records with inspectors.
- Inspectors spoke to a selection of pupils individually. Some pupils were chosen because they had experienced sanctions under the school's behaviour policy. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke to 30 parents during the inspection, reviewed the eight responses to Ofsted Parent View, and considered three written responses sent separately to Ofsted, providing parents' views of the school's provision for remote education.
- Thirty staff responses to Ofsted's survey were evaluated.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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