

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Corbridge (VA) Church of England First School

St Helen's Lane, Corbridge, Northumberland NE45 5JQ

Inspection dates:

29 April 2025

Outcome

Corbridge (VA) Church of England First School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy and welcoming place. Pupils flourish here and are proud of the school's strong Christian values and nurturing ethos that underpin everyday life. High expectations for pupils' outcomes and wellbeing are shared by all. In return, pupils work hard, enjoy their learning, and typically achieve well across the curriculum.

Pupils behave well. The school's approach focuses on building strong and trusting relationships between adults and pupils. In lessons and at playtime, pupils respond positively to adults and their peers. This contributes to the harmonious atmosphere which permeates around all areas. Any incidents of bullying or unkindness are unheard of. When they do occur, the school manages them sensitively and effectively. Pupils receive the support they need when they need it.

Pupil voice is at the heart of the school's ethos. They value the help given to them by their teachers and embrace the many and varied leadership opportunities on offer. From the 'Chicken Experts' and the 'Diversity Ambassadors' to the 'Eco Councillors' and 'Friendship Buddies' there is a role for everyone. This helps to prepare pupils well for life beyond school. They are active and positive citizens in their community.

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

The school has worked effectively to design a comprehensive and well-sequenced curriculum that is ambitious for all its pupils. It sets out clearly the essential knowledge, skills, and vocabulary that pupils need to learn. Learning for each subject builds sequentially each year. A raft of curriculum enhancements and enrichment activities

supplement the curriculum offer further. This is helping pupils to develop a secure understanding of the intended curriculum. Nevertheless, a few aspects of the school's curriculum require further work. This is particularly so in mathematics, where strategies to improve pupils' mental arithmetic skills are not fully embedded. Consequently, pupils do not have the speedy recall of key multiplication facts as the school intends.

Reading is high priority. The school places much emphasis on nurturing a love of reading for all pupils. Much thought has gone into replenishing the school library, with a raft of accessible reading books available. The wide-ranging selection of books comes from a range of genres that caters well for pupils' wider interests and abilities. Pupil 'reading ambassadors' offer lots of encouragement to their peers to read widely and often. They also help them with their reading choices.

The school's approaches to the teaching of early reading are effective and consistent. It makes sure that pupils develop an understanding of the sounds that letters make quickly and securely. Teachers skilfully check that pupils practise their reading skills and that the books pupils read are matched to their phonics knowledge. However, the school's approaches to the teaching of early writing are less consistent. Opportunities to consolidate accurate letter formation and sizing are not maximised fully in all year groups. Occasionally teachers focus on extending pupils' writing before securing consistency in pupils' handwriting, punctuation, and spelling. Where this happens, some pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Children settle quickly in the early years and get off to a great start. The curriculum is well considered and interesting. It precisely identifies the foundational knowledge children need for later study. The indoor and outdoor environments are well organised and engaging. Interactions with adults are positive. This helps children to sustain their interests in learning and play. Children are well-prepared for their learning in key stage 1.

Pupils with special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND) are well-supported. Teachers adapt learning effectively and make sure that pupils with SEND access the curriculum fully. Parents and carers appreciate the support they and their children receive. Consequently, pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers successfully and achieve well.

There is a comprehensive and well-considered personal development programme. Considerable thought has gone into developing pupils' understanding of diversity and equality. Pupils know it is important to respect others irrespective of their beliefs and that everyone should be treated fairly. They are proud of their roles as members of the diversity council, the school council and as the 'chicken experts.' Pupil leaders contribute effectively to the life of the school and work with their peers to raise donations for charities they support.

Governors use their knowledge and skills effectively to support the school. They undertake their roles with commitment and diligence. They maintain a strong focus on pupils and staff wellbeing. Staff value the support and training they receive. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's approaches to the teaching of early writing are not implemented effectively enough. This affects how quickly pupils secure accuracy in their writing. The school should improve its approaches to the teaching of early writing so that more pupils build strong transcriptional skills and learn as well as they could.
- In mathematics, the school's strategies to improve and embed known arithmetic facts are not embedded fully. As a result, pupils' outcomes in the multiplication tables check and the speed with which pupils can recall key mathematical knowledge are variable. The school should strengthen this aspect of its mathematics curriculum, and make sure that pupils learn their arithmetic knowledge securely and develop speedy recall of key multiplication facts.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour, or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in November 2019.

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	122287
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10346370
Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gayle Baty
Headteacher	Suzanne Hart (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.corbridgefirst.northumberland.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 November 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of a hard federation with Broomhaugh Church of England First School. The executive headteacher oversees both schools in the federation.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school offers 30 hours of Nursery provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school has 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, and staff. Inspectors also met with members of the governing body, including the co-chairs.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- 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 spoke with some parents during the inspection. They also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Dawn Foster

Ofsted Inspector

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