

Inspection of Witton-le-Wear Primary School

Witton-le-Wear Primary School, 31 St James Gardens, Witton-le-Wear, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 0BG

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 April 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher of this school is Shawn Laws. This school is part of the Advance Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kelvin Simpson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alan Boddy.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Witton-le-Wear Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Witton-le-Wear Primary School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as an academy. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a highly aspirational and caring school. Staff know pupils and their families extremely well. Pupils describe the school as a family. They feel safe and belong here. The school has shaped the educational and pastoral offer to ensure pupils thrive. This helps pupils to be confident to be themselves.

The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from personalised support. Pupils achieve exceptionally well. They discuss their learning in depth and make links across curriculum subjects and with current global issues.

The school develops pupils' independence by encouraging them to plan and lead lunchtime activity clubs, entrepreneurial projects and community events. Pupils enjoy the range of experiences to explore local history and landmarks. They develop respect for the local area.

Pupils value the awards and celebration opportunities the school provides. They enjoy working together to gain castle points as well as individual rewards. There are high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Most pupils behave well. The school teaches pupils how to use the internet safely. The school ensures that pupils know how to keep themselves safe in the local area.

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

The curriculum is designed to be engaging and meet pupils' needs. There is a sharp focus on how well the curriculum helps pupils to fulfil their potential. The school has prioritised the knowledge and skills pupils need to know. This is clearly understood by staff and pupils. This ensures that the mixed-age classes are well managed and pupils access work that meets their year group expectations.

Staff are well trained to deliver the ambitious curriculum. The school is proactive in engaging with development programmes and training to strengthen staff expertise. This helps to maintain high-quality curriculum delivery across classes.

Staff are acutely aware of exactly what support pupils need to progress in their learning. Pupils benefit from tailored support in and outside of the classroom as well as personalised strategies to help them learn. This helps all pupils to be successful in their learning. Pupils remember their learning over time with detail, accuracy and confidence.

The school identifies pupils' special educational needs as soon as they join the school. The school works closely with specialists within the trust, so that pupils receive timely access to the services they need. Pupils with SEND work towards the same ambitious learning as their peers. The timely and bespoke support that they receive helps them access classwork with increasing independence. Pupils with SEND are included in all aspects of school life. As a result, pupils flourish.

Reading is important at Witton-le-Wear. Pupils have a genuine love for books and enjoy sharing recommendations with their peers. The school ensures that children are well prepared to learn to read quickly and fluently when they join Reception. In the early years, phonics is woven throughout most activities. Staff are highly skilled at helping children to use their phonics knowledge at all times. Pupils who need additional support learning to read receive this throughout the school day. The school has taught older pupils how to analyse and critique texts with impressive maturity. Pupils discuss the texts they are reading with great depth and understanding.

Children in the early years have an exceptional start to their schooling. Staff expertise and the well-planned curriculum ensure that children have a strong foundation of learning. Children independently navigate the routines of the school day. They collaborate together well. They build obstacles, sandcastles and patterns together. They do this using language that they have been taught. Children have plenty of opportunities to apply their new learning. They are very well prepared for key stage 1.

The school's approach to managing attendance is excellent. Pupils and families know it is important to be in school regularly and on time. Pupils enjoy the various ways that positive attendance is recognised. Most pupils behave well. The school has introduced systems to help pupils regulate their emotions. Pupils reflect on how this helps them. However, the school has not yet embedded its recently renewed approaches to supporting pupils' behaviour. This leads to a lack of consistency in staff's approaches. Consequently, sometimes, pupils are not clear how to meet the school's high expectations.

The school offers a range of opportunities to broaden pupils' development beyond the curriculum. Pupils benefit from a variety of educational visits and career days. Pupils talk about why their learning is important for future career choices. Pupils relish the many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. This helps to develop their sense of citizenship.

Leaders, and those responsible for governance, are highly committed to the achievement of all pupils. They work together well. The training and development governors and trustees receive provides them with the expertise to hold the school to account well. There is a rigorous approach to pupil achievement. Leadership across the school and trust work together exceptionally well to ensure 'no child is left behind'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The behaviour systems in school are not yet well embedded. This means that some pupils are not yet clear how to meet the school's high expectations. The school should continue to develop consistency in its approach to behaviour management.

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	149499
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10379440
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	104
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alan Boddy
CEO of the trust	Kelvin Simpson
Headteacher	Shawn Laws
Website	www.witton-le-wearprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Advance Learning Partnership in 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds.

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 spoke to senior leaders, including representatives from the board of trustees and academy council.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. 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 spoke to leaders about pupils' learning in some other subjects.
- Inspectors listened to a range of pupils from different year groups reading to 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 met the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, spoke to pupils with SEND and reviewed plans to support these pupils. They visited lessons to see how pupils with SEND are supported.
- Inspectors visited the early years provision to check safeguarding arrangements and discuss the learning with children and leaders.
- Inspectors observed behaviour at the start of the day, at lunchtimes and in lessons.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and staff survey. They also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments.

Inspection team

Georgina Chinaka, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Birch

Ofsted Inspector

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