

Inspection of Whinney Banks Primary School

Fakenham Avenue, Whinney Banks, Middlesbrough TS5 4QQ

Inspection dates:	10 and 11 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They sing the school song with great enthusiasm and enjoy the many opportunities that they experience. Warm, supportive relationships are a strength at the school. These help pupils to feel happy and safe in school. Pupils know that they always have someone to talk to and that staff will help them with any problems they have.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and progress through the curriculum. Pupils rise to these and, typically, they achieve well.

Pupils behave well. Many demonstrate positive and respectful behaviour. On the occasions that they do not, the school intervenes appropriately and supports pupils to modify their behaviour. Children in the early years learn clear routines that prepare them well for their next steps.

Pupils benefit from many enrichment opportunities. They enjoy trips to places of interest that help them to understand the world around them and bring learning to life. For example, pupils visit different places of worship and local landmarks linked to their learning. Many pupils take part in the wide range of extra-curricular clubs which help to nurture their talents and interests.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has worked diligently to address areas identified for improvement. The school has identified what pupils should know and when. This helps to ensure that pupils build knowledge securely over time. In many subjects, this is well established, with pupils making links between what they know and what they are learning. Teachers check pupils' understanding and adapt their teaching to address gaps. In most subjects, they notice if pupils need further explanation and adjust the lesson accordingly. However, in some subjects checks on how well pupils remember knowledge are less developed than they are in others.

Reading is a high priority in the school. Staff are well trained in the delivery of phonics. Pupils develop a love of reading from an early age. Staff read to pupils enthusiastically. The books that pupils read are well matched to the sounds that they know. There is a sharp focus on developing children's communication and language skills in the early years. This helps children to gain the vocabulary they need for future learning. The school identifies accurately, and provides effective support to, pupils who need additional help to read well. Beyond phonics, the school has a programme to improve fluency and comprehension. This helps pupils to read well at an age-appropriate level. Every day, older pupils spend time reading independently. They value and enjoy this time.

The school is very inclusive. It caters well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and identifies pupils' individual needs accurately. The school ensures that staff have the necessary resources to provide effective support for pupils with SEND.

Children in the early years experience a rich curriculum. They are immersed in language through stories and high-quality talk. Staff set out activities that promote learning well, including language development and independence. Children are highly engaged in these. For example, in the Reception Year, children use the language of safety confidently when practising crossing roads. Children demonstrate great pride in their work and are keen to show what they do and know with visitors. Staff know children very well and use clear routines to support positive behaviour.

The programme for enrichment and personal development has many strong aspects. Pupils speak with confidence about a range of important issues that help them to be safe, healthy and well prepared for life in modern Britain. They can relate these to their lives, such as following the school's rules and voting in the classroom. Older pupils value their leadership roles, such as being a science ambassador.

The school has established behaviour routines that pupils follow well. The school takes effective action to ensure positive attendance for all. Staff quickly identify pupils who need extra support to attend regularly. They work with families, through their pastoral work, to overcome barriers to pupils attending school. As a result, many pupils attend well.

Leaders at all levels have an accurate view of the school and have identified the right areas to focus on to further improve. Staff are very positive about working at the school. They feel that workload and well-being are considered, and they feel valued.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Checks on pupils' learning are not used as well in some subjects as they are in others. Where this is the case, teaching does not identify and address gaps in understanding as well as it does elsewhere. The school should carry out further work so that checks on pupils' understanding are used to better support pupils' learning across all subjects.

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	134076
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	10379369
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Martin Pottinger
Headteacher	Sandy Thorpe
Website	www.whinneybanks.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 October 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has provision for two-year-olds.
- The school uses three registered alternative provisions for a small number of pupils.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum documentation and work for the writing curriculum. Inspectors also discussed other curriculums with leaders for these subjects.
- The lead inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the early years leader and the special educational needs coordinators and met with representatives of the local governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including records of governing body meetings, leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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 positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. Inspectors considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors also reviewed the responses that were received through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, which included free-text comments.

Inspection team

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