

West Newcastle Academy School Evaluation Document (SED) September 2023

Introduction

WNA is a free school with a unique way of learning for the families in west Newcastle. We aim to provide space and time for children to develop a deeper way of learning, and for parents to be engaged in that process. By exploring learning in small groups and in many different contexts (the city, forest, beach, school and home), we will ensure every child has many opportunities to learn in ways that best match their interests and abilities.

The School's Vision All children will achieve their full potential, with holistic support, whilst enjoying and driving their own learning, gaining self-respect, self-esteem and self-belief. Our classroom extends to rich, exciting environments within the forest, the beach, the city and the community as a whole.

Our Ethos Respect for the core capabilities of children and the recognition that all children are unique individuals with a wide range of abilities and potentials. Children are valued as strong, sociable and capable individuals, constantly learning and enquiring about the world about them.

WNA is a place where children will be encouraged to be curious, to ask questions and to learn from one another. Children at our school will be encouraged to question their teachers, formulate their own theories and validate possible results. Dialogue with, and democratic decision making between children, staff, parents and the wider community is central to the running of WNA.

Context

WNA is situated in Benwell, an area of deprivation just west of Newcastle. Pupils start school below their peers, property is mainly through private lettings and house moves in the area can be frequent. Families choose the school for its distinct ethos and most of the children live close to the school, within a mile.

WNA is a highly effective organisation, with nurture and child centred learning at its core. Learning and teaching are good if not better and the school has capacity to sustain this and to further develop the range and quality of the provision on offer. Governors and leaders are passionate and relentlessly ambitious. They consistently aim for outstanding outcomes in all areas of school development. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins all aspects of children's learning and experiences at school. This is evidenced in the high standard of behaviour throughout the school, the high levels of engagement and enjoyment seen in lessons and the very positive relationships between all parts of the school community.

The school gained good in Ofsted (2015) and again, in 2019. Ofsted rated all areas of the school good which matches school self-evaluation. The reports can be accessed:

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50089249>

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2487895>

1. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Achievement

GOOD

Quality of Teaching

Outstanding staff ensures high expectations and a child centred curriculum ensures bespoke teaching for learning. Staff expertise means teaching is specifically tailored to meet individual needs. Sessions are challenging; differentiated and progressive. Small group teaching enables staff to effectively check pupils' understanding throughout lessons, anticipating where they need to intervene; this has a clear impact on progress and understanding.

The daily teaching of reading, writing, communication and mathematics is highly effective through focused planning based on next steps. Progress is swift and reviewed each half term to identify needs and 'quick win' pupils. Consistently high quality marking and constructive feedback from all staff ensures that pupils make significant and sustained gains in their learning.

Outdoor and Community Learning is a strength as skills are taught as part of the whole curriculum.

Lessons observed in last 3 years are judged to be good or better. Children are highly motivated and engaged during lessons.

Quality of Pupils' Learning

The quality of pupils' learning is good or better. Children are ready to learn and enthusiastic to participate in the learning of the lesson. Children have the opportunity to practice key skills through a range of contexts because of an engaging, relevant curriculum. There are nurturing relationships across school with strong pupil voice and a deep understanding of individual pupils, drawing on their interests and skills. The quality of work in children's books is of a high standard.

Outdoor learning, choice and child initiated learning has resulted in high levels of resilience, confidence and independence.

Extra-curricular activities deepen learning. A funded holiday club takes place each break to offer outdoor learning and core skills. After School and Breakfast Club offers support for reading and homework and Early Bird Reading and tutoring sessions are offered.

Quality of Achievement

The large majority of pupils make good progress, from low starting points. Those who are falling behind are offered daily intervention, Early Bird Reading and 1:1 support. Pupils' abilities and understanding are assessed accurately and regularly reviewed. Scholar Pack is used effectively and consistently across school to monitor and improve achievement.

Covid lockdowns have resulted in some gaps in achievement this impacted on maths attainment at KS2 in 2023.

Strengths

- Very good use of teaching time
- Outstanding behaviour for learning
- Outstanding progress and daily intervention for those who need it
- Phonics and reading teaching
- Maths teaching, early phonics
- Small group learning ensures challenge is high; learning is differentiated and challenging
- Outdoor and Community Learning

What do we need to do next?

- Ensure challenge and differentiation in upper KS2
- Focus on foundation subjects and wellbeing
- Develop CiL in EYFS and KS1

2. Behaviour

GOOD

Pupils are welcoming and friendly. They are proud of their school and the wide range of learning they enjoy. Lesson observations provide evidence of good or better behaviour management strategies. Pupils collaborate willingly and effectively, reflecting staff modelling. Pupils have high levels of engagement and collaboration in child initiated learning.

Planning and risk assessments identifies vulnerable pupils; there are agreed strategies and behaviour management plans for those that need them. Thrive is a strength of the school and is supported by targeted counselling for the more vulnerable.

All pupils are keen to debate and consider others perspectives. Respect is a strength of the school. Pupils in all year groups are able to support and care for one another. They show very high levels of engagement, courtesy, collaboration and cooperation in and out of school and have enthusiastic attitudes to learning.

Pupils spend a significant amount of time learning in different contexts. Behaviour and learning attitudes in Outdoor and Community Learning situations are excellent; pupils listen to instructions, cross roads, use tools safely and can risk assess for themselves. Throughout covid children have had an opportunity for Outdoor and Community Learning in the Nature Park. They are now enjoying visits to the wider area.

Attendance is an area of review as this has declined with covid, ongoing illness and some more persistent absenteeism (92%, Dec 22, 89% Feb 23, 91% April, 91% May.) A number of families are in very vulnerable situations and have been well supported by other families, staff and pupils. The Office Staff work hard to ensure good attendance and to explain its impact on learning. There is an Attendance Officer to support with Persistent Absenteeism.

Key Strengths:

Behaviour

- Behaviour is very good and this means learning time is maximised
- There are high levels of respect, engagement and collaboration

Safety

- Pupils are able to risk assess and take care of each other. They are aware of dangers and how to keep each other safe
- All staff are first aided trained and there is excellent use of risk assessments

Attendance

- Good support for vulnerable families from whole school

What do we need to do next?

- Improve Attendance in 2023,24 to 96%

3. Personal Development

Pupils are supported to become responsible, respectful and active citizens within their community through School Council, active assemblies, Community and Outdoor Learning. All of these aspects of school feature a strong use of pupil voice and focus on the individual child.

Prevent and British Values are interwoven within the curriculum in order to deepen pupils' understanding of the fundamental British values.

Access to all aspects of school (including uniform) is free which promotes equality of opportunity. Our inclusive learning environment is constantly reviewed to meet the changing needs of all pupils. Key awards such as Rainbow Flag reflect this positive approach.

Outdoor and Community Learning are effective in developing pupils' character, building confidence and resilience. Effective transition and PHSCE sessions are effective in preparing pupils for the future. Our inclusive, multi-cultural community provides plenty of opportunities for debate and understanding of diversity.

Strengths

- Outdoor and Community Learning effectively builds on all aspects of personal development
- Residential experiences are attended by all in KS2

What do we need to do next?

- Continue to develop wellbeing into the curriculum

4. Leadership and Management

GOOD

All staff, leaders and governors have the highest expectations and are dedicated in building an ethos of care and respect.

The school ethos focuses on pupils as unique individuals, improving outcomes for all, especially for disadvantaged pupils. The school aims to raise aspiration for the whole community and to provide opportunities for pupils to learn about the opportunities that are available to them through practical experiences e.g. visiting the theatre, outdoor environment, university, museums and art galleries. There is shared leadership, weekly phase and whole staff meetings ensuring a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the next steps for the school. Middle Leaders have a key role in curriculum review and development and there is an Assistant Headteacher (appointed for September 2021.)

Governors share their expertise and meet regularly to carry out more than their statutory duties in supporting and challenging school improvement. Governor visits, regular meetings and links with leadership have had an impact on playing a vital and well-informed role in school improvement. Governors have attended School Self Evaluation Days and Data Review Meetings with staff. Safeguarding of children is effective with annual audits.

Strengths

- Leadership is shared throughout school. There are excellent relationships, care and nurture
- The curriculum is innovative and is broad in range. There is a good balance between adult directed and child initiated time. The local community is well used through Outdoor Learning
- Governors are experts in their fields and use this for the benefit of the school

What do we need to do next?

- Further develop expertise in order to provide more opportunities for creative, artistic and musical excellence in school
- Ensure more targeted governor review to further support and challenge

5. Early Years Foundation Stage

GOOD

Quality of Leadership and Management in EYFS

The Early Years leader has transformed EYFS provision (in post since 2018). She promotes very effective teamwork; providing time and the ethos for staff to plan and review together, formally at weekly meetings and informally each evening to ensure that activities are well matched to pupils' ever-changing needs and interests.

Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment in EYFS

- Teaching, by all members of the EYFS team, is good or better. Child initiated learning (CiL) is a main part of the curriculum with maths, phonics, talk for writing and theme learning interwoven into the day
- Ongoing provision is carefully planned for following themes and children listen carefully, question and consider, and are happy to share resources and to take turns in activities
- Outdoor learning is highly effective and extends individual interest as well as linking to learning inside. Outdoor Learning (2 days each week) provide depth and motivate pupils to find out more when following their own interest
- Outcomes are reviewed each half term and changes made to provision based on need. The progress children make in the EYFS is good. Baseline assessment shows that pupils are well below the national averages on entry and some take until Y1 to reach expectations in all areas

Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare

EYFS children are highly motivated and keen to learn. They are inquisitive and keen to join in new activities. They develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and manage risks and challenges. Staff consistently follow behaviour and safety policies to ensure the children's health, safety and well-being.

Parents are engaged in their children's learning and are well informed about their children's achievements and progress through Learning Journals, planning information, informal induction session and Parents Consultation Evenings. These excellent relationships ensure all children are able to take part, learn and make progress.

Outcomes for Children

All groups are making steady and sustained progress, from low starting points. Outcomes for children in EYFS are consistently improving and there is a trend of rising attainment since the school opened. We have a nursery on the school site (Spring term 2023).