

Whinstone Primary School

Address: Lowfields Avenue, Ingleby Barwick, Whinstone Primary School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 0RJ

Unique reference number (URN): 145223

Inspection report: 14 July 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders' work to tackle persistent absence has been successful. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing. Leaders' determined efforts have improved pupils' attendance overall, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders check attendance patterns meticulously and follow up on any absences swiftly. They work well with families and the local authority to ensure that families receive the support they need so that pupils can attend school regularly.

Pupils' behaviour reflects leaders' high expectations. It is highly positive across the school. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils listen attentively and respond thoughtfully to one another in lessons. During social times, pupils play happily. They are well supported by pupils who take on the role of 'play leaders'. Pupils show kindness and respect for each other. From the early years onwards, pupils learn to play together with consideration of others. Staff consistently apply leaders' expectations. This creates a positive environment where pupils feel safe. Bullying and discriminatory behaviour rarely occur. Leaders take firm action to deal with any issues. Incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils learn to manage their emotions and show increasing self-control as they progress through the school.

Early years

Strong standard ●

Before children start in the early years, staff get to know them and their families well. This helps staff to build a thorough knowledge of how best to support children. Leaders identify any additional needs early, including those who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Nothing is left to chance in the early years. Staff carefully plan every aspect of the indoor and outdoor provision. Staff talk with children often. They model using language precisely. Staff build children's vocabulary effectively. Leaders have developed training and highly effective systems to ensure that staff consistently meet children's needs. For example, leaders ensure that staff gain the expertise to develop children's knowledge and skills through their high-quality conversations.

Staff identify the areas of learning where children typically need more support to develop. For example, leaders prioritise building phonics knowledge, vocabulary and early writing. Leaders ensure that children have plenty of opportunities to develop and practise these skills. Staff check children's understanding across all areas of learning. They establish consistent routines and develop warm relationships with children. Children are very well prepared for Year 1.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders create a highly inclusive culture that ensures all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, experience success. Leaders have established robust systems to check and review pupils' needs with

precision. Alongside staff, leaders work to consistently and effectively reduce barriers to pupils' achievement. Leaders ensure that every child is known, understood and supported from the start in the early years. Leaders and staff provide highly effective support for pupils. This means that pupils make notable progress through the curriculum.

Pupils receive effective support that is precisely matched to their needs. Leaders' regular checks on pupils' learning helps them to identify where support is most effective and where amendments might be needed. Ongoing training for staff ensures that they have the expertise they need to provide pupils with consistent levels of support.

Leaders work closely with parents, carers and external specialists to get the right support for pupils. They ensure that recommended strategies are swiftly implemented in classroom practice so that barriers to learning are reduced. Leaders check the impact of additional funding closely. They use funding to improve pupils' academic success and to meet pupils' emotional needs. Pastoral support is highly personalised. Disadvantaged pupils access school life fully.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

The personal development programme provides rich opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures, faiths, local and world events. Pupils learn to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences. They value learning about different religions and understand how it helps them to relate to others. Pupils show a deep understanding of right and wrong. They talk insightfully about fairness, equality and how people should treat one another. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, such as the importance of democracy, through their roles as pupil leaders.

The curriculum is rooted in pupils developing an understanding of healthy relationships. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the local community. For example, through the many visitors to school, pupils learn about cold water safety. Staff skilfully weave the programme through the wider curriculum so that pupils build a deep understanding of the world beyond the school. In the early years, children learn to identify their emotions. As pupils progress through the school, they develop empathy for others. They develop into confident and considerate young citizens.

Leaders provide a rich set of experiences to develop pupils' talents and interests. They support all pupils to benefit from these by actively encouraging pupils who may not choose to attend. Many pupils access opportunities that they may not encounter outside of school, for example writing and performing speeches for a regional competition.

Pastoral support is a significant strength of the school. Leaders identify emerging needs and barriers promptly. Pupils know who to approach for support and feel safe, valued and listened to.

Leaders provide an extensive range of leadership roles for pupils to contribute to school and the wider community. Roles include 'mental health champions' and 'reading ambassadors'. Pupils are proud to support their local community by participating in, for example, charity events.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils typically achieve well in reading and mathematics. This enables them to confidently access learning across subjects. The impact of leaders' improvements to the writing curriculum is clear in pupils' high-quality work in English. Pupils' writing in some other subjects is not of the same high standard. This hinders pupils from producing high-quality work across all subjects.

Most pupils attain the standard expected of them by the end of key stage 2 in national assessments. Many pupils attain particularly well in mathematics at the end of key stage 2. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make notable progress through the curriculum from their starting points. In 2025, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils at the school was higher than disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Children in the early years make secure progress through the curriculum from their starting points. They build secure foundations in reading, writing and mathematics. In phonics, outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check have been above the national average over time.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have made well-considered improvements to the curriculum. They identify the important knowledge that pupils will learn and break this into small steps. Leaders make thoughtful connections between subjects to strengthen pupils' basic skills. They check the quality of teaching regularly. This helps to inform the ongoing training that staff receive. Leaders ensure that teachers are equipped to make skilful adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged.

Teachers use their subject knowledge skilfully. For example, they model and explain new learning carefully. They generally use the information from assessments effectively to adapt teaching and to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge. Phonics teaching is highly effective. Leaders identify any pupils who may be at risk of falling behind and put in place timely support. Staff model the language that they want pupils to learn. Pupils receive support to use subject-specific vocabulary in both speech and writing. In writing, refinements to the English curriculum include a greater focus on the correct use of grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting. Staff identify gaps in pupils' knowledge well. However, there is some inconsistency in the application of these skills across other subjects. Sometimes, staff do not consistently correct errors in transcription, punctuation and grammar.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders consider a range of evidence to evaluate the school's strengths and identify areas for improvement. They use this information to shape the school's strategic priorities. This ensures that decisions are made in the best interests of pupils, particularly those who are

disadvantaged. The impact of their approach is particularly evident in the highly effective provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders understand the school's context and the community they serve. They are highly aspirational to ensure that the school is fully inclusive.

The trust's programme for professional learning is well planned and thoughtfully considered. It supports whole-school improvement and provides tailored development for staff. Teachers at all stages, including those at the start of their careers, feel well supported. Collaboration within the trust and with specialist settings further strengthens staff expertise. Leaders ensure that staff workload and wellbeing are considered.

Trustees have taken appropriate steps to support the new local governing committee. For example, they draw upon governance expertise from across the trust. This enables those responsible for governance to carry out their statutory duties well, including maintaining careful oversight of safeguarding. Governors understand school improvement priorities, such as developing provision for pupils with high needs. Clear systems ensure effective collaboration between governors and trustees. Leaders recognise the need to support staff who are new to leadership so that their impact is consistent, embedded and sustained.

Parents and carers are typically positive about the school. They praise the support for their children. Leaders and governors engage positively with parents and the wider community.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming school. They develop trusting relationships with adults. This helps pupils to feel safe and ready to learn. Pupils remember and follow the school's rules well. This starts in the Nursery where adults support children to resolve problems to develop independence. Older pupils explain how they apply the rules to everyday situations, such as showing respect for others. Pupils understand the importance of attending regularly. This is reflected in the school's improving attendance figures.

Leaders establish a culture in which pupils understand the importance of responsibility. Through their leadership roles, pupils contribute to school life. They speak enthusiastically about improvements that have resulted from their suggestions. Recent examples include fundraising for a local charity.

Staff's high expectations and thoughtful support for pupils ensures that those who face barriers to learning or wellbeing are fully included. Pupils feel confident to seek help from trusted adults. They use the school's 'worry boxes' to share problems. Pupils enjoy learning. They respond thoughtfully to each other's ideas in lessons. Bullying is rare. Pupils say that staff deal with any issues that occur quickly. There are activities to suit all interests during social times. Pupil 'play ambassadors' make sure that everyone is included. There is a culture of mutual respect and care between pupils. This helps them to flourish.

Staff are ambitious for all pupils to succeed. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive high quality support. Children in the early years

enjoy activities that build secure foundations for future learning. Overall, pupils achieve well by the end of key stage 2.

Older pupils choose from an extensive range of clubs, including dance, drama and a range of sports to support their wider development and interests. Leaders ensure that pupils can fully participate in school life. This prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

Next steps

- School leaders and governors should continue to strengthen leadership expertise so that all leaders contribute effectively to school improvement.
 - Leaders should embed their work to strengthen important foundational skills, particularly in writing, so that the accuracy of pupils' writing improves across the curriculum.
 - Leaders should ensure that improvements in attendance are sustained so that more pupils do not miss out on important learning.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Spark Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Louise Spellman, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Charlotte Irving.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection took place from Tuesday 14 to Wednesday 15 July 2026.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, both assistant headteachers, the CEO and a director of education for the trust, the chair of the board of trustees, the school's link trustee and members of the local governing committee, including the chair and vice chair during the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently uses no alternative provision.

At the time of the last inspection, in April 2022, the school was part of the Vision Academy Learning Trust. This trust merged with the 1590 Trust in December 2024 to form the Spark Education Trust.

The current headteacher took up post in April 2024.

Lead inspector:

Kathryn McDonald, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Julie McGrane, Ofsted Inspector

Amy Cookson, Ofsted Inspector

Rowena Sykes, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

This was the data available at the time of the full inspection, taken from [different sources](#). More recent data may have been published since the full inspection took place.

 The inspector(s) used this data during the full inspection on 14 July 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

468

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

498

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

15.04%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.35%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

8.76%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational needs support at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English indices of deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	70%	61%	Above
2024/25 (final)	73%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	64%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	75%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	78%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	76%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	78%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	80%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	82%	72%	Above
2024/25 (final)	85%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	75%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	90%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	85%	73%	Above
2024/25 (final)	87%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	77%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	92%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	54%	46%	Above
2024/25 (final)	64%	47%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	41%	46%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	69%	44%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	67%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	64%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	59%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	85%	60%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	70%	59%	Above
2024/25 (final)	73%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	59%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	85%	58%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	67%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	82%	61%	Above
2023/24 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	85%	59%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	54%	68%	-13 pp
2024/25 (final)	64%	69%	-6 pp
2023/24 (final)	41%	67%	-27 pp
2022/23 (final)	69%	66%	3 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	67%	80%	-12 pp
2024/25 (final)	64%	81%	-17 pp
2023/24 (final)	59%	80%	-21 pp
2022/23 (final)	85%	78%	6 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	70%	78%	-8 pp
2024/25 (final)	73%	78%	-6 pp
2023/24 (final)	59%	78%	-19 pp
2022/23 (final)	85%	77%	7 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	67%	80%	-12 pp
2024/25 (final)	82%	81%	1 pp
2023/24 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	85%	79%	5 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	5.0%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.0%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	4.8%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	10.4%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	12.0%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.9%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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