

Whitnash Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	125560
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	381089
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Lead inspector	Peter Kerr

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judy Falp
Headteacher	Deborah Fulford
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Peter Kerr

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent 5 hours in classrooms, visited 11 lessons or parts of lessons and observed eight of the school's teachers. He listened to pupils reading, looked at their writing and mathematics work across the curriculum and talked to them about their experiences. Meetings were held with teachers about their leadership responsibilities and with members of the governing body about their roles. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at teachers' planning, the tracking of pupils' progress and pupils' work on display. He took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, and analysed the views of parents and carers expressed in 55 parental questionnaires.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than typically found. About one in five pupils belong to minority ethnic groups, the largest of which is pupils of British-Indian heritage. About one in five pupils speak English as an additional language but none are at the early stages of learning to speak English. The proportion of disabled pupils and those identified as having special educational needs is higher than in most schools of this type and size. Most of these pupils have either speech, language and communication needs, moderate learning difficulties, behaviour, emotional and social needs or an autistic spectrum disorder. The school has one Early Years Foundation Stage Reception class. The adjacent privately managed pre-school provision is inspected separately.

The school meets the current floor standards set by the government. It has been awarded the Active Mark and has Healthy Schools status. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2012.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is improving strongly but it is not yet good because of remaining weaknesses in writing and mathematics and in some aspects of the management of behaviour.
- Attainment is average in English and mathematics but lower in writing than in reading, particularly among boys. Progress is satisfactory but not yet consistent enough, particularly in boys' writing and in pupils' application of mathematical skills.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Planning is detailed but teachers do not adjust lessons sufficiently in the light of pupils' responses, for example by challenging pupils to improve and extend their spoken English or mathematical thinking. The good learning that was seen resulted from staff interacting purposefully with pupils as they worked.
- All parents and carers say their children feel safe in school and pupils say they feel safe. Behaviour is satisfactory. The vast majority of pupils behave very well but a few pupils with complex behavioural and learning needs sometimes distract others because their behaviour is not managed as effectively as it should be. Parents and carers and pupils commented on this.
- The headteacher has brought vitality and direction to the leadership of the school and improved relationships with the local community, which some parents and carers comment favourably upon. Other leaders, although new to their roles, are beginning to have a positive impact. Under this revitalised leadership and management, teaching is improving and is strongly focused on improving pupils' performance. The curriculum promotes reading well but is less effective at encouraging pupils to think mathematically and boys to write well. Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced through the celebration of individual personal qualities but opportunities are missed to develop awe and wonder, for example, through exploring patterns in nature.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing, particularly among boys by:
 - giving pupils more frequent opportunities to speak in different ways, including drama and role play and challenging and supporting them to extend and improve their utterances before they begin to write them down
 - adjusting the curriculum to motivate reluctant writers, particularly boys, to write at length and for practical purposes.

- Improve pupils' understanding and enjoyment of mathematics and their spiritual development by:
 - devoting more class time to discussion of pupils' own thinking
 - giving pupils more opportunities and support to undertake open-ended investigations
 - using other subjects, especially science and art, to help pupils discover and explore patterns in the natural and man-made environment.

- Improve behaviour for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social needs by:
 - providing more training and support for staff in managing pupils with complex disabilities and behavioural and learning needs so that they can continue to be fully included in lessons without distracting other pupils
 - adjusting classroom groupings to enable pupils with behavioural needs to interact positively with a wider range of pupils as they work
 - communicating with parents and carers more effectively about behavioural needs and the school's policy and procedures for managing them.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers say their children make good progress but the inspection found that progress is satisfactory and improving. Attainment is average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in reading and mathematics but below average in writing, mainly because of low attainment among boys. Attainment on entry to Reception is below expected levels. The children make good progress and the great majority of them achieve most of the Early Years Foundation Stage learning goals by the end of the year. The children learn well, largely through chosen play activities that encourage them to practise skills that have been recently taught.

Progress is more rapid in reading than in writing in Years 1 to 6. Pupils make good progress in basic reading and spelling skills because they learn and practise them regularly throughout the school. They are willing communicators and when motivated by interesting activities that encourage talking, they participate

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enthusiastically. For example, Year 1 children talked animatedly together about how to give and follow instructions and enjoyed putting these skills into practice to make jam sandwiches. The pupils' efforts are not always harnessed to best effect in these lessons because staff focus too heavily on supporting pupils once they begin writing rather than on improving what they say before they begin to write. This is a contributory factor to the continuing gap between girls and boys in writing. Girls often extend and improve their written sentences independently, but boys' writing is briefer and simpler, reflecting their shorter spoken sentences. Pupils said that they enjoyed discussions and roleplay and would like more opportunities to talk about their own ideas.

Although attainment is broadly average in mathematics, pupils do not develop sufficient confidence in applying their mathematical skills. Examples of good progress were seen. For example, Reception children spontaneously discussed who was taller during role play in the 'doctor's surgery' following a taught session on comparing length and weight. Year 2 pupils enjoyed making fractions of numbers using plastic bricks in a practical activity that helped them to understand halves and quarters. In Year 3, pupils tried out different ways of writing out solutions to mathematical problems and said this helped them to understand why the answer was correct. Learning slows when the pupils spend too much time either listening to teachers explaining how to solve problems or completing tasks without discussing their own thinking.

There are no differences in progress for pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are fluent in English and make similar progress to their peers. Nearly all disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. However, a very few pupils with complex behavioural emotional and social needs as well as learning difficulties make slower progress because their needs are not always fully met. The gap in attainment between these lowest-attaining pupils and the majority is therefore not closing rapidly enough. This has triggered further interventions by the school.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers say that their children are taught well. The inspection judged teaching as satisfactory. Good teaching was seen when brief introductions were followed by practical tasks that made the pupils think, with adults available to challenge and support as required. When teaching was satisfactory it was often because the adult support was primarily directed towards helping pupils complete set tasks or worksheets rather than assessing and improve their skills. In mathematics lessons, these methods limit opportunities for staff to identify individual misconceptions and add further challenge. In English lessons, opportunities are missed to help pupils improve and extend their spoken language. Pupils say they think teaching is good, but that they would like more speaking opportunities.

Provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is satisfactory

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and improving. Pupils are grouped according to need and usually supported to make similar progress to their peers. Extra interventions successfully accelerate progress for most pupils not responding to in-class support. Current teaching arrangements have not succeeded in accelerating learning for a very few pupils with the most complex emotional and social needs and learning difficulties so specialist support is planned.

The outdoor environment is being increasingly developed to widen pupils' learning experiences. Year 2 pupils, for examples, enjoyed looking for plants and small creatures in the wild-life area. Planning for the use of this area lacks a focus on specific skills, however, such as accurately describing the flora and fauna that they find and attempting to identify and categorise them.

The promotion of pupils' spiritual and cultural development is under-developed in curriculum planning. Music and art enrich pupils' experiences, but opportunities are overlooked, for example, to encourage awe and wonder at the constant patterns in nature and to explore the mathematics of them.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that silly behaviour by a very few pupils distracts them in some lessons. A small minority of parents and carers also expressed this view. The inspection found that behaviour is satisfactory. The great majority of pupils behave well and disruptive behaviour is rare. It usually occurs because pupils with behavioural, emotional and social needs as well as learning difficulties do not respond well to the support they are given. It was noted on occasions during the inspection that pupils with behavioural needs engaged more positively when placed in more diverse groups than when working in their usual groupings. Pupils' good learning behaviour often contributes to their progress. They collaborate well and are willing to work hard.

A small minority of parents and carers say that bullying is not dealt with effectively. Some written comments related to previous provision and both parents and carers and pupils say that things have improved a lot. Pupils mistakenly included one-off rough behaviour under bullying and said that intimidation of vulnerable pupils, including those with disabilities and special educational needs is very rare. They said that the headteacher was always ready to listen to any concerns and that this helped them to feel safe in school. Attendance is average and persistent absences, which were high, are now also broadly average.

Leadership and management

'I feel the school is improving every day with the headteacher who is very positive and makes time for pupils.' This comment reflects the positive views expressed by other parents and carers on leadership and management. No negative comments were received. The inspection found that leadership and management are satisfactory rather than good, however, because the headteacher and other staff

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with leadership roles are too new to their posts for their impact to be fully evaluated.

Some specific improvements are strongly evident and were commented on by parents and carers. These include better provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and communication between the school and parents and carers and the community. The inspection agrees with these views. Pupils also feel that they have a voice. As one pupil expressed it, 'The headteacher's door is always open'. Improved relationships with partners were evident in positive comments from staff in the on-site pre-school provision about the new ease of communication with the school to the benefit of children in both settings.

The school improvement plan provides a realistic timetable for addressing the correct priorities. The need to provide more stimulation for boys to write well is acknowledged, as is the comparative lack of staff expertise in creative and investigative mathematics and in the management of highly challenging behaviour. Staff feel well-supported in their professional development and welcome initiatives to update their training on these key issues facing the school.

The school meets all safeguarding requirements and all staff say that children are kept safe. It promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. It identifies individuals or groups at risk of exclusion, discrimination or under-achievement and takes effective steps to address causes of these concerns. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes reading well and celebrates improvements in writing, but which does not yet motivate and support boys sufficiently to write at length. It promotes spiritual development well through the celebration of the worth of each individual but there are too few planned activities designed to inspire awe and wonder, for example by exploring mysteries and patterns within the universe.

The governing body fulfils its role satisfactorily and fully supports the headteacher in the drive to raise standards. It keeps itself well informed about pupils' achievements and the quality of provision and is fully aware of the school's weaknesses. The strongly improving trend in pupils' attainment and progress and many aspect of provision, together with the vibrant sense of common purpose and shared ambition show that the school has the capacity to make further improvements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitnash Primary School, Leamington Spa, CV31 2EX

Thank you for making me welcome and sharing your thoughts and views with me. I enjoyed talking with you and was impressed with how hard most of you work. Yours is a satisfactory school with some good points. Your new headteacher and her team know what to do to make this a good school. Your achievements are satisfactory rather than good because your writing is not yet as good as your reading, especially for boys, and you are not as confident as you could be in using mathematics. Nearly all of you behave very well, but just a few of you behave in ways that distract others and take up too much of the teachers' time. When you have interesting things to do like drama, practical mathematics and making things, you learn well. When you listen to teachers for too long and do too much work on your own, your progress slows. You told me you enjoy drama and would like more, and I agree that this is a good idea. You all feel safe in school and know that if you have any problems the headteacher or another member of staff will help you. Your teachers help you to feel good about yourselves and to appreciate that everyone has good points. Your lessons include music and art to help you appreciate beauty but there is not enough in your lessons about how wonderful the natural world is. Here are the things I have asked your teachers to do to make your school good rather than satisfactory.

- Help you all and especially boys to improve your writing by giving you more drama and role-play and other talking activities so you have more to write about.
- Help you to do more investigations in mathematics and to explore patterns in the natural world.
- Help those of you who find it difficult to behave well to fit in with lessons so that the rest of you are not distracted.

You can contribute by continuing to work hard, being willing to talk about your ideas and being inquisitive about the world around you.

Yours sincerely

Peter Kerr
Lead inspector

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