

Whitley Village School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110997
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	362881
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Marguerite Murphy HMI

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	43
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen Hood
Headteacher	Mrs Amanda Powell
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2007
School address	Village Lane Lower Whitley, Warrington Cheshire WA4 4QH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. Lessons were observed in each of the three classes and all teachers were seen. Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the chair and vice-chair of governors, a representative of the local authority, members of staff and pupils. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including development plans and school policies, minutes of governing body meetings, headteachers' reports, information on pupils' attainment and progress, safeguarding documents and scrutiny of pupils' work. Questionnaires returned by 34 parents and carers and those from staff and pupils were analysed.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The effect of staff absences at leadership level and a significant fall in the number of pupils on roll on the school's provision and pupils' outcomes.
- The school's progress in the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching from Reception to Year 6 and its impact on pupils' learning.
- The effectiveness of the current leadership and management arrangements in embedding ambition, driving improvement and securing the school's capacity to improve.

Information about the school

Whitley is a much smaller than average school serving the villages of Whitley and Dutton and taking pupils from a wider area between Northwich and Warrington. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and all speak English as their first language. The number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is just below average, while the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average.

Since the last inspection in June 2007, the number of pupils on roll has fallen from 84 to 43, with the most significant number having left the school since the start of 2010 and prior to the beginning of the autumn term. The previous headteacher, who also had a teaching commitment, was absent due to sickness for several months prior to her resignation in July 2010. The assistant headteacher has also been absent before her recent resignation from the post. The acting headteacher joined the school in April 2010 to lead Whitley in a part-time arrangement alongside her substantive headship of The Acorns, a large primary school in Ellesmere Port. This is soon to be formalised in an agreed federation arrangement between the two schools, their governing bodies and the local authority from January 2011.

The school holds the following awards: Healthy Schools, Eco Silver, International School, Activemark and Traidcraft (Fair Trade).

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Whitley Village School has a warm, friendly and inclusive ethos that is greatly appreciated by pupils, their families and the local community with which the school has many positive and mutually beneficial links. The school provides a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils. Pupils' personal development is particularly strong. They feel safe and well cared for, have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, their behaviour and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Teaching, although satisfactory overall, is improving rapidly because teachers are keen to learn from the good range of professional development opportunities provided. Parents and carers unanimously agree that their child enjoys school and that it provides good levels of care, guidance and support for each individual.

The school has emerged from a challenging year of changes to leadership and governance in which its financial stability has been affected by the drop in pupil numbers. The school's progress in the areas for improvement identified at its last inspection had been very slow until recently. In some respects, the school had not been able to keep up with some of the changes needed to meet new challenges in order to maintain and improve pupils' achievement. Data on pupils' attainment in tests and assessments fluctuate from year to year, disproportionately affected by the small size of cohorts of pupils. Scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that attainment is currently in line with, and occasionally above, national averages, but with variations in different year groups. Pupils' reading, speaking and listening skills are generally higher than in writing and mathematics. Pupils are sometimes given too much support and direction for their writing, for example from worksheets, rather than being stretched to write more independently. Gaps in basic mathematical understanding for a few pupils slow their progress in solving more complex problems. From their starting points, pupils are making satisfactory progress in their learning and there are clear signs that this is beginning to accelerate as the good leadership and improving teaching and assessment are having an impact. Inspection evidence confirms that successful action has already been taken to remedy some relatively weaker aspects of the school's performance, contributing to its good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' rates of progress and overall achievement, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that teachers make more effective use of assessment to support pupils' learning and plan activities to more closely match the needs of individual learners in the mixed-age classes

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- increasing the level of challenge and questioning in lessons to fully extend pupils' learning through their application of thinking and problem-solving skills
- ensure that ongoing assessments identify gaps in pupils' understanding of key mathematical concepts so that these can be remedied through focused plans and intervention
- develop further the Early Years Foundation Stage provision, including continuous outdoor activities, and ensure that regular assessments are used in planning these to more fully match individual children's development needs.
- Raise attainment in writing by:
 - providing pupils with more extended opportunities to write purposefully across the full range of subjects, as part of a review of the school's curriculum
 - raising teachers' expectations of pupils' independent writing
 - ensuring that consistently high expectations of presentation and handwriting are evident in pupils' work.
- Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils enjoy school and make at least satisfactory progress. For example, during the inspection, pupils in the Key Stage 1 class were motivated by the teachers' enthusiastic approach to a literacy lesson on the theme of superheroes. Good use of interactive whiteboard technology added to pupils' interest in the topic, as did their task to design identity cards for their own imaginary superhero. Pupils enjoyed giving verbal descriptions of their characters and spending time illustrating the card before completing their written work. Similarly, pupils in Key Stage 2 were observed enjoying their work in a mathematics lesson. Those in Year 6 were focused on applying their knowledge of angles of a triangle, and Year 4 pupils were working with the teacher to interpret a ferry timetable and television schedules. The school is aware that on occasions the strategy of providing prescriptive worksheets is not as challenging as it could be in extending pupils' independent writing skills. Pupils' work in books is also inconsistent with regard to the quality of handwriting and general presentation. Also, while some pupils in Key Stage 2 were able to confidently calculate and explain how they were answering the problems posed, others made less progress due to gaps in their knowledge of basic number calculations when, for example, responding to questions about 'how many minutes had passed'.

Pupils' average standards in literacy and numeracy mean that they are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education and their future lives. There are a number of strengths in their personal development. Pupils talk very positively about their school and demonstrate a good appreciation of the local community as well as national and global communities and cultures. Their understanding of, and commitment to tolerance, justice and equality were evident in discussion with pupils during the inspection. It is also seen in the way in which all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are equally happy with what the school provides for them and all groups of learners make similar rates of progress. Pupils show respect for others and enjoy taking

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on roles of responsibility in the school. They are also enjoying building links with the soon-to-be federated partner school, for example in sharing the expertise of pupils on Whitley's Eco council.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The school's more recent monitoring of teaching indicates that it is often good. However, it has not yet been of consistent quality over time and throughout the school to ensure that pupils are always challenged to make more rapid progress. Consequently, teaching is judged to be satisfactory and improving. Teachers know the pupils exceptionally well, relationships are positive and pupils grow in confidence as their successes are recognised and their achievements celebrated. Teachers use resources well and teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who require additional guidance or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers are beginning to use marking more effectively to point pupils towards what needs to be done to improve their work, in addition to praising good efforts. However, they do not always use assessment of pupils' prior learning well enough to provide just the right level of challenge for the different levels of ability in the mixed-age classes. Questioning is not always sufficiently challenging to promote pupils' thinking and reasoning by requiring more depth in their explanations.

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The curriculum is most positive in its impact on pupils' personal development, for example their enjoyment of school, contribution to the community and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Examples of the many projects contributing to this are sports partnerships with other schools, French teaching to all pupils, the well-established 'seed to saucepan', annual European Day of Languages, and a good range of day and residential trips, visitors and extra-curricular clubs. The school recognises that there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills across the curriculum, to ensure these skills are more fully developed across a wider range of subjects.

The emotional needs of all pupils are met well through the school's good care, guidance and support. Pupils are kept safe and feel valued. This was clearly demonstrated in the weekly achievement assembly observed during the inspection, attended by a good number of parents and carers. Beaming smiles lit up pupils' faces as they received praise and certificates from staff and were applauded by their parents and peers. The breakfast and after-school clubs are well run and flexible on a daily basis in response to parents' needs, which is much appreciated.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher provides a clear vision and renewed sense of direction to the school's work, effectively leading and developing staff and governors to contribute to the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. Staff morale is high and teamwork is strong. Effective performance management systems are in place and leadership responsibilities are appropriately distributed according to the needs of a small school. Staff respond well to this and are held accountable for reporting on their areas of responsibility. The acting headteacher monitors teaching well and provides detailed and useful feedback to teachers, who are keen to access the well-focused training opportunities offered to develop their skills.

The school is benefiting from the good support of the local authority, including its agreement to a five-year plan for reducing the managed budget deficit, thus securing the school's satisfactory value for money. The effectiveness of the governing body is developing positively from a relatively slow start earlier in the year due to some issues which are now resolved. Governors understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement and are committed to playing a full role in challenging and supporting the school. Governors and staff are equally optimistic about the forthcoming federation arrangements and have already started to work in partnership with the Acorns Primary School in a number of areas. In fact, the Acorns' contrasting location and socio-economic

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circumstances makes a useful contribution to Whitley's good promotion of community cohesion, ably led by the school's higher-level teaching assistant.

The school's attention to equal opportunities is most successful in its provision of equal experiences and the inclusion of all pupils in what the school has to offer, for example in the curriculum and levels of care and support, and in knowing all pupils as individuals. However, the use of assessment is not yet finely-tuned to identify and remedy quickly enough any gaps in pupils' learning, whether for individuals or cohorts of pupils.

The school pays careful attention to safeguarding pupils. All current requirements are met and good practice is evident in, for example, communication with parents and carers on matters of safety and behaviour, including a well-attended presentation on internet safety.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good relationships between home and school help children to settle into school life quickly and confidently. Most children enter the Reception class with skills and understanding that are broadly typical for their age, and make sound progress to meet the majority of their expected early learning goals. Some aspects of their personal development are relatively weaker, for example in learning to share and take turns, and the school is working to improve this. Children generally make better progress in physical and creative development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. This was demonstrated during the inspection when the teacher encouraged children to explore and investigate the snow, ice and water using their senses. This prompted children to make observations such as 'the ice might get smaller if you put it in the water', 'water is plain because you can see the bowl at the bottom', and 'water is liquid and ice is solid'. Children make choices about the activities they engage in, and respond positively to teacher-led

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activities and discussions. Children enjoy their learning and adults ensure that they are kept safe and healthy.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has been keen to benefit from recent training in the latest requirements of the key stage and has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development. Improvements have been made to the environment and organisation of resources and areas of learning. The leader recognises that adults' observational skills and assessments are not yet used skilfully enough to plan activities that closely match each individual child's development needs. There are appropriate plans to develop the outdoor learning area to improve children's continuous access to this for child-initiated, as well as adult-directed, learning opportunities.

The school is working to develop further its links with the local pre-school facility attended by many of the children in order to enhance the smooth transition and continuity of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire and almost all are completely happy with everything that the school does. This reflects the school's very positive relationships with parents and carers, who value highly the hard work of all staff and the education that their children receive. Several parents commented on a number of positive changes in the school recently, including the general leadership and drive for improvement. Inspection evidence confirms that this bodes well for Whitley's future development as a federated school, which contributes to the good capacity for improvement and its longer-term future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitley Village School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 43 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	27	79	7	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	71	9	26	1	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	21	62	13	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	68	11	32	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	74	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	82	6	18	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	53	14	41	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	56	15	44	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	62	13	38	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	74	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	85	5	15	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	65	10	29	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



3 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitley Village School, Warrington, WA4 4QH

Thank you for your warm welcome and the help you gave me when I visited your school recently. Whitley is a satisfactory school that is quickly improving, so you are right to be proud of it and I could see how much you enjoy being there. Here are just a few of the many good things I found.

- Your behaviour is good; you feel safe in school and know about how to keep yourselves safe and healthy.
- The school is being well led and everyone is looking forward to the benefits of the links you have already started to develop with Acorns school.
- All the adults in school take very good care of you and your achievements are celebrated well. I enjoyed seeing all the smiling faces, yours and some of your parents, at the assembly!
- You make a good contribution to your school and community, and understand a lot about other communities and cultures, and how everyone is equal. You raise funds for good causes, too.

I have asked the school to do some things that will help it to improve further, and these include ways to make sure that you are challenged more to make faster progress in your learning, particularly in writing and mathematics.

You can help by always working and thinking hard in lessons, taking care with your handwriting, and checking that you know what your targets are and how you are going to reach them.

Yours sincerely

Marguerite Murphy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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