

Whitestone Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125545
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	363992
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Johnson
Headteacher	Nicola Green
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 11 teachers as they visited 21 lessons. The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and pupils. They looked at a range of information, including data showing the progress made by pupils and samples of pupils' work. The inspectors analysed questionnaires returned by 93 parents and carers, and 23 members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- To what extent is the school able to demonstrate that all groups of pupils make at least good progress, particularly the vulnerable and less advantaged?
- How effective has the school been in improving the quality of teaching and learning since its last inspection, and particularly in ensuring that learning objectives are very clear and that pupils know exactly what they need to do to be successful in lessons?
- How rigorous are managers at all levels in their monitoring and evaluation of their areas of responsibility? What is the impact of middle managers on pupils' progress?

Information about the school

This is a large, three-form entry infant school. It is located on the southern outskirts of Nuneaton and shares a site with the Stepping Stones Pre-School and Kids Club and a community centre. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. Most of these pupils have general learning difficulties. There is a small but increasing number of pupils with emotional and social difficulties. In response, the school has very recently established a nurture group to help meet the needs of these pupils. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average but has more than doubled over the past three years because of changes within the school's catchment area.

The school has a number of accreditations and awards including Healthy School status, an Activemark accreditation for its promotion of physical education and sport, and the ICT mark for its use of technology.

The Stepping Stones Pre-School and Kids Club was inspected separately.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Whitestone Infant School is outstanding. It provides its pupils with high quality care, guidance and support and a curriculum that meets their needs and interests exceptionally well. Teaching is securely good.

An important factor in the school's success is the outstanding partnership with parents and carers. Almost all of those who returned the inspection questionnaire had positive views about all aspects of the school's performance. Typical of the many positive comments appended is: 'I am particularly impressed with the opportunities to engage with parents and get us involved within the school community. This is an outstanding school.'

One of the school's many strengths is the outstanding progress made by pupils in many aspects of their personal and social development. Pupils have an excellent appreciation of how to keep safe and live healthily. Their behaviour is generally good and in closely supervised situations, such as when moving into or out of assembly, it is impeccable. Pupils' high-quality social skills contribute strongly to the consistently good, and sometimes excellent, learning evident in all classes. Learning is not outstanding because pupils have yet to develop resilience in tackling challenging work and sometimes rely too heavily on teachers for help. This is because teachers do not always provide or make full use of opportunities to develop pupils' skills as creative and independent learners through investigation and problem-solving.

When children join the Reception classes they have skills that are similar to those expected for their age. They make good progress in their Reception year because they have ready access to a wide range of interesting activities and are taught well.

Over the past two years, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 have been consistently high and pupils' current work shows that this trend is set to continue. One of the key contributory factors to this high level of performance has been the very strong focus placed on developing pupils' skills as readers. Consequently, by the time they reach Year 2 pupils are articulate and have excellent vocabulary and comprehension. These skills contribute strongly to their learning in all subjects.

The headteacher, the governing body and the whole staff share an ambitious vision for the school, and are partners in a clear plan of action to further strengthen the school's performance. Accurate assessments of the quality of teaching, combined with very thorough tracking of pupils' progress and analysis of data, has enabled the school to identify precisely where it needs to improve, and detailed planning underpins developments. The improvements made since the last inspection in pupils' attainment, the quality of care, guidance and support for pupils and the partnerships that help promote learning and well-being, demonstrate a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide consistently challenging opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity and to practise and improve their skills through investigation and problem-solving.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Throughout the school, pupils work hard in lessons and are keen to learn because they find their work interesting and enjoyable. A focus on Australia in the Year 1 classes, for example, provided many opportunities for teachers to link work in a number of subjects. In mathematics lessons, teachers made good use of pupils' previous learning in geography by using illustrations of Australian animals placed within a grid as a tool for teaching coordinates. In these lessons, teachers' effective use of the information and communication technology (ICT) provided in all classrooms illustrated their explanations. This new learning was secured through teachers' use of phrases such as 'along the hall' and 'up the stairs' to help pupils locate pictures of animals by using the horizontal and vertical axes of the grid.

By Year 2, pupils' excellent knowledge of letter sounds and blends enables them to read challenging pieces of text with reasonable fluency. The ongoing, strong emphasis placed on developing pupils' skills as writers has resulted in an improvement from above average to high attainment since the last inspection.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those circumstances make them potentially vulnerable, make similarly good progress. This is because their learning needs are quickly identified, and they are offered carefully tailored support which is monitored closely and reviewed regularly. In some instances, the focus for the school has identified that the support needs to be on improving social skills, including the ability to cope with any upsets, since these have an adverse impact on learning in lessons. One of the sessions observed was in the newly-established 'Owl's Nest' nurture group, which comprises pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. Here, the two teaching assistants, in common with all their colleagues, showed great patience and skill in getting pupils to learn to listen, obey rules, take turns, work with others and show appreciation of others' achievements.

Pupils contribute to school life with enthusiasm. They willingly take responsible roles such as play leaders, monitors for saving energy and water, or as members of the school council. Their strong contributions to the local and wider community are illustrated through involvement in ongoing initiatives to resolve parking problems outside the school gates, participation in local events such as an arts festival and regular support for local and national charities. Pupils' commitment to living healthily is recognised through the Healthy School status and Activemark accreditation, and is evident in the high levels of participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided, such as clubs for football, gymnastics, and multisports. Pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education. Their skills in oracy, literacy and numeracy are outstanding, and their competence in using technology is recognised through the ICT mark. However, these qualities are partially offset by pupils' lack of skills as independent learners. Pupils' outstanding spiritual and cultural development was evident in an assembly, attended by parents and carers, in which a group of pupils in Year 2 demonstrated their expertise in playing the violin. The audience, comprising pupils in Years 1 and 2, showed great

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appreciation of their achievements. Pupils' moral and social development is also of a high order. They work and play together amicably, respect others' feelings and ideas, and have a well-developed sense of fair play.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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?

Lessons are well organised and carefully structured, and resources are used well to support learning. Teachers have good questioning skills which they use effectively to extend pupils' thinking. In all lessons, teachers ensure that pupils know precisely what they are to learn and set out clearly the 'steps to success' that the pupils need

- to follow in order to achieve their learning goals. However, this approach can also lead to directive teaching that limits pupils' ability to use their own initiative. In outstanding lessons, this is not the case. For example, in a Year 2 science lesson the teacher deliberately gave the pupils little guidance in their initial task of classifying different types of food. This activity produced much animated discussion and resulted in many different responses including categories based on appearance, such as 'runny food' and 'wiggly food', to those based on healthy eating criteria. Following this introduction, the teacher then introduced and explained challenging, subject-specific vocabulary such as 'carbohydrate' and 'protein' before requiring the pupils to re-classify their materials and to record the results of their debate by using digital

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cameras. In a few instances, teaching does not fully stretch the most-able pupils when they do not have separate 'steps to success'.

The curriculum provides many opportunities for exciting learning, and pupils benefit from specialist teaching of French and sports. There is a very strong emphasis on high-quality personal, social and health education. A key factor in the excellent impact of the curriculum is the regular review of planning by the year group teams. This enables activities to be adjusted according to changing needs. Planning is truly collaborative, with all teachers in a year group team contributing ideas for each of the subjects within a topic. Teachers follow the plans closely, ensuring equality of provision for all pupils. Current initiatives in place to improve the curriculum further include the use of first-hand experiences to stimulate pupils' imaginations and provide exciting opportunities to develop writing skills.

The school is an extremely caring community in which pupils' welfare is given a high priority. The individual needs of every pupil are very well understood, and excellent support is given to the potentially vulnerable. Procedures for the very smooth induction of pupils into the Reception classes include very close liaison with the pre-school provision on site and visits by the Early Years Foundation Stage leader to other pre-school settings. Similarly effective arrangements enable pupils to transfer confidently to a local junior school at the end of Year 2.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The clear direction provided for the school is driven strongly by the headteacher's ambitious vision for the future, which is shared by staff and governors. There is a clear plan for school development, but the lack of specific and measurable targets for improving literacy and numeracy mean that progress in achieving targets cannot be measured objectively. The capable team of leaders at all levels provides effective support by helping to ensure that the work of the school is closely monitored. Staff are fully supported in developing their professional practice and morale is high.

The governing body is well led, provides effective challenge and plays an important role in moving the school forward. Although a number of governors are relatively new, there is also a core of experienced, long-serving governors who provide good continuity. The governing body ensures that safeguarding procedures have a high profile and are rigorously applied as a result of well-developed systems for quality assurance and risk assessment. However, there are no governors trained in safe recruitment procedures. The school's clear commitment to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination is

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implicit in all its actions. It carefully monitors and evaluates the performance of all groups of pupils, and ensures that unevenness in their rates of progress is minimal. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. The school knows its own community well and is effective in broadening pupils' horizons both nationally and globally through, for example, close links with the local authority inter-cultural support service. The newly-appointed parent support adviser is helping develop effective links with the increasing number of hard-to-reach families.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The children have good access to an excellent range of interesting and enjoyable activities, both indoors and out. Careful planning, which ensures good coverage of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, together with good teaching result in good progress. By the time children transfer to Year 1, most children have securely attained the goals expected at this age. Children make particularly good progress in all aspects of their social and emotional development, and these skills provide a secure platform for continued good progress in Key Stage 1.

The assessments of children's learning and progress are not always sharp enough. This is particularly the case in respect of 'captured moments' as children work independently. In these cases, the records of children's achievements are sometimes too descriptive and lack clear evaluation of precisely how well they tackle their tasks. This means that the next steps in learning are not sharply defined for each individual. Assessments conducted during activities closely directed by adults are generally better.

Good leadership and management ensure that children are able to learn safely through purposeful play. Adults interact well with children and are good at using questions to help develop learning. They involve children well in making decisions, give clear explanations,

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have high expectations of what children should achieve, and ensure that they feel safe and secure. All children are valued and treated as individuals as in a family, with clear boundaries, underpinned by sound policies.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly appreciative of the school. About one third of the questionnaires returned by parents and carers had comments appended, and the vast majority of these were entirely positive. A common theme among the positive comments is appreciation of the success of the school in promoting children's personal development, a view endorsed by the inspection findings. There is no common theme within the few negative comments.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitestone Infant 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 inspection team received 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 268 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	72	23	25	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	70	75	20	22	3	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	49	53	41	44	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	65	28	30	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	65	30	32	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	62	30	32	5	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	56	39	42	2	2	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)	42	45	38	41	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	58	34	37	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	48	38	41	6	6	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	40	47	51	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	55	59	36	39	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	65	70	24	26	4	4	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



11 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitestone Infant School, Nuneaton, CV11 4SQ

I am writing to you to tell you that your inspectors really enjoyed being at your school. We enjoyed talking to you and listened very carefully to what you had to say. You told us that you think that your school is excellent, and we agree.

Here are some of the many good things about your school.

You learn well in lessons and make good progress because you are taught well and you are really interested in the exciting things teachers plan for you.

By the time you move to the junior school at the end of Year 2, you are much better at reading, writing and mathematics than children of your age in most other schools. Well done!

We were impressed by your good manners and behaviour.

You feel safe because all of the adults in your school make sure that you are very well looked after.

You know a lot about how to keep healthy.

The people who run your school are doing a really good job.

I particularly enjoyed listening to your violin playing in assembly and to the lovely singing by Year 2. Well done!

To help you to make even better progress, I have asked your teachers to make sure that you have to think a lot more for yourselves and plan what you need to do to investigate and solve the problems they give you. I think that this will make your lessons even more exciting. I am sure that you are ready for this challenge. You can also help by listening very carefully to what your teachers ask you to do and by not giving up when the challenges you are given seem to be quite difficult.

I hope that you enjoy lots of success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Thompson

Lead inspector

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