

Whitehall Junior Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104162
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	355535
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Ken Bush

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	286
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Colleen Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Attwood
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 15 lessons taught by 15 teachers, and, in addition, visited a number of shorter learning sessions. Meetings were held with senior leaders, including the headteacher, subject leaders and members of the governing body, including the chair. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at planning documentation, assessment information, examples of pupils' work and a number of policy documents. The team analysed 53 questionnaires received from parents and carers, together with 204 from pupils and 20 from school staff.

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

- The extent of any variation in pupils' achievement across different year groups and the progress made by more-able pupils generally.
- How successful the school has been in improving rates of attendance in the current academic year compared with previous years.
- The impact of the school's strategies to improve teaching and pupils' learning since the previous inspection.
- Whether leadership at all levels, including by subject leaders, is having a demonstrable impact upon improving pupils' outcomes.

Information about the school

Whitehall is an average-sized junior school. Most pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the most significant proportions from Asian/Asian British-Pakistani and Asian/Asian British-Bangladeshi communities. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than that found in schools nationally. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average; these pupils' needs are mainly related to moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also well above the national average. The school has been part of the Black Country Challenge since January 2009. The present headteacher took up her post in September 2009. The governing body operates a breakfast club daily on the school site.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Whitehall Junior is a good and improving school. Although there has been significant staff turnover and a number of changes to key leadership positions since the previous inspection, the headteacher has built successfully on the secure foundations laid by her predecessor and accelerated the rate of improvement in most areas of the school's work. The school is a harmonious and welcoming community in which all pupils thrive. Good care, guidance and support underpin the school's inclusive ethos, enabling pupils to feel safe and valued as individuals. They report that bullying is extremely rare because as one stated, 'We all know that's just wrong.' Pupils are confident in adults' ability to deal with it effectively.

Although there are some small variations when comparing different year groups, rates of progress through the school are at least good, notably in Year 6 where some pupils make outstanding progress. As a result, attainment, which had historically been low, is now broadly average and improving rapidly. This reflects the school's very successful intervention strategies, such as the introduction of ability groups, which have raised attainment in mathematics to the same level as in English and ensured that a greater proportion of more-able pupils gain the higher levels in both subjects. Inspection evidence, such as scrutiny of pupils' books, indicates strongly that progress in writing is also improving across the school and in most year groups is now comparable with progress in reading.

Although pupils' basic skills are clearly developing well in mathematics and English lessons, pupils currently have limited opportunities to practise them in different ways in other subjects. The school has begun to address this issue through recent adaptations to the curriculum, but the impact is yet to be seen fully. Well-coordinated improvement planning and high-quality professional development have ensured that the great majority of teaching is now good and, in most cases, meets the needs of pupils well, enabling most to make good progress. However, few examples of exceptional learning were seen during the inspection because, in some classes, pupils are not always as actively involved in lessons as they might be nor are they always given enough opportunities to work independently for sustained periods of time. School leaders and the governing body have taken sound early steps to promote community cohesion, but they have yet to evaluate fully the impact of the actions they have planned.

Self-evaluation of the school's work as a whole is accurate, with clear, ambitious but achievable plans for further improvement in place. Robust quality assurance systems enable information about pupils' progress and other aspects of the school's work to be used effectively by all staff. Leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, make a good overall contribution to raising achievement. The school's track record of good and improving outcomes, the growing impact of an increasingly strategic governing body and

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the clear progress made since the previous inspection demonstrate that the school has good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by:
 - providing more opportunities for all pupils to participate actively in lessons and exercise greater independence in their learning
 - enabling pupils to practise their basic skills in different ways in a wider range of subjects.
- Ensure that school leaders and the governing body evaluate more fully the impact of their planned actions to promote community cohesion.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy school greatly and are enthusiastic about their learning in almost all lessons. Consistently good behaviour in lessons, as well as around the school, generally makes a distinct contribution to good learning and progress in all year groups. Pupils are keen to learn and by the time they are ready to move on to secondary school they are able to apply themselves for sustained periods of time without difficulty. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils demonstrated high levels of motivation, application and enjoyment when trying to beat the stopwatch to complete mental mathematics problems of increasing difficulty. In a successful Year 5 history lesson, pupils' empathy for the experience of wartime children in the Blitz was enhanced during a simulation of the air raid routine. Pupils wore gas masks they had made and hid under tables giving a sense of reality to their learning.

From below average starting points, the progress made by all groups of pupils, including both the more able and those who find learning more difficult, is good and they achieve well. As a result of well-tailored support and timely interventions, the progress made by the relatively high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is closely in line with that of their peers, and, in exceptional cases, better. Similarly, pupils who speak English as an additional language also make good progress because of the consistent and well-coordinated approach taken by all staff, including close liaison with families. Although there are small fluctuations year-on-year and in different subjects, there has been a narrowing in the achievement gap between boys and girls who now achieve at a comparable rate over time.

Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle. Most eat healthy lunches and the majority participate in the wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities offered. The school council gives some pupils a strong voice within the school and initiatives such as 'playground pals' offer others a chance to exercise leadership and show responsibility. Opportunities to contribute in the wider community are developing, but limited. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clearly evident in lessons, assemblies and through the sensible way in which the pupils relate to, and communicate with, adults and with other children, including those with different faiths and cultural traditions than their own. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils in an English lesson were able to empathise with characters in a family who were experiencing the social challenges of redundancy in a notably mature manner. The school

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has been conspicuously successful in addressing historically low rates of attendance, which is now broadly average and improving quickly. This, together with broadly average basic skills and improving capability in information and communication technology, means that pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	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	3
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	3
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?

In most lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge to encourage pupils to discuss their ideas and follow this up through well-planned, collaborative work. Succinct reviews of previous learning at the start of lessons and careful explanations of the learning to follow ensure that pupils generally understand the purpose of their lessons. Pupils have a clear understanding of the steps they need to take to improve through the constructive feedback provided by teachers, including good-quality marking, and, in some lessons, through self- and peer-assessment. Information and communication technology, such as interactive whiteboards, is used well to explain points and promote interest. In the small minority of less effective lessons, some tasks are not planned sufficiently closely to match all pupils' needs and capabilities, or the teacher talks for too long, so limiting pupils' active involvement, which results in a slackening of pace and pupils' engagement.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of most pupils. A good start has been made at adapting the curriculum to make it more relevant and exciting by making thematic links between the areas of learning. Pupils are proud of their involvement

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in special themed events, such as World Book Day, and the theatre workshops with the Royal Shakespeare Company which resulted in a joint school production. The school's increased focus on developing pupils' basic skills is leading to clear improvements, particularly in relation to boys' writing. However, on occasions, opportunities to develop basic and wider key skills in broader contexts and ensure skill progression across different subjects are missed. Close links with local secondary and primary schools have helped enrich the curriculum, providing additional activities for gifted and talented pupils. Extra-curricular provision and the range of trips are strengths, particularly in relation to physical education and sport where the school enjoys fruitful links with Walsall Football Club.

The school is effective in supporting pupils most in need of additional help and those facing challenging circumstances. The achievement and needs of all groups of pupils are carefully monitored and pastoral care is good. Close liaison with a range of specialist external agencies and well-designed intervention programmes, particularly related to emotional and physical health, have helped a number of pupils to overcome significant barriers to learning. The role of the effective learning mentor has been instrumental in this work. Systems for promoting regular attendance and punctuality are now robust and have contributed to rapidly improved attendance in the present academic year and a sharp reduction in persistent absence. Provision at the daily breakfast club enables children who attend to begin the day adequately prepared for learning.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders have developed a clear vision to take the school forward which has been translated into an effective strategic plan. The school sets challenging, but realistic, targets for all pupils and has developed leadership capacity at all levels, enabling it to improve significantly since the previous inspection. Although some subject leaders are relatively new in post and are still developing their skills, overall, they are making a rapidly improving contribution to monitoring pupils' progress and to leading professional development within their teams. The overwhelmingly positive responses to inspection questionnaires indicate that staff morale is very high.

The governing body discharges its responsibilities satisfactorily and, in the case of safeguarding, well. It is rapidly improving its effectiveness in holding the school to account and actively seeks to build its capacity by recruiting new governors with proven expertise when the opportunity arises. Equality of opportunity is vigorously and successfully promoted and is reflected in the good achievement of all groups of pupils; instances of discrimination are extremely rare. Procedures for ensuring the effectiveness of

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safeguarding, including risk assessments, are good and clearly understood by all staff. Clear and robust arrangements are in place for monitoring how well policy is translated into practice.

The school has made a satisfactory contribution to promoting community cohesion which has particularly benefited its pupils. Formal links with the wider community are developing gradually but are not yet extensive. The school has begun to evaluate its various plans and activities to guide future initiatives, but school leaders and the governing body recognise that this is an area requiring further development. School leaders have been innovative and determined in their efforts to secure greater engagement of parents and carers through, for example, providing curriculum information evenings and providing translation facilities for those speaking English as an additional language or with little or no English. Consequently, attendance at consultation meetings for parents and carers is consistently high.

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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned by parents and carers was lower than that found for most primary schools. However, of those who did respond, almost all expressed satisfaction with the quality of education provided and how the school is moving forward. There were only a very few comments from parents and carers that expressed any explicit criticisms of the school and no single issue was identified as a cause for concern from parents and carers as a whole.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitehall Junior Community 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 53 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 286 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	45	27	51	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	47	26	49	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	34	30	57	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	28	35	66	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	34	32	60	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	34	33	62	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	19	38	72	3	6	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)	17	32	34	64	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	23	39	74	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	23	37	70	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	25	35	66	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	25	37	70	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	32	34	64	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	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.



19 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitehall Junior Community School, Walsall WS1 3JY

Thank you very much for welcoming us so warmly to your school. We have judged that Whitehall Junior is a good school and it is clear to us why almost all of you are proud to go to it. You told us that you feel safe in school and you convinced us too that you know a lot about how to lead a healthy lifestyle. You behave well and show that you care about your classmates and other people outside of the school.

You make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because the lessons which your teachers and other staff provide are mostly good. As a result, your attainment by the end of Year 6 is similar to that found in most other primary schools. Teachers also mark your work carefully and give you useful targets so that you all know what to do to improve it further. Staff look after you well and give you good support. Your headteacher and all the other adults, including the governors, lead the school well.

There are things which can be improved and so I have asked your headteacher and the governors to:

- give you more opportunities to be actively involved in lessons and to learn without the teacher's direct help more often
- allow you to practise your reading, writing and number skills in different subjects more often and not just in English and mathematics lessons
- evaluate in more detail the different activities that the school does with the local community.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. You can help to improve it further by continuing to do your best in your learning.

Yours sincerely

Ken Bush

Lead inspector

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