

Whitehouse Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124660
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	363982
Inspection dates	30 June 2011–1 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Garry Cook
Headteacher	Jacqui Frost
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 22 lessons taught by 18 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They also met with a Traveller support worker. They observed the school's work and looked at a selection of documentation, including planning, evidence of monitoring records, including the school's lesson observations, and analyses of pupils' work and other assessment information. The inspection team scrutinised inspection questionnaires returned by 87 parents and carers, as well as those from staff and pupils.

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

- How effective are measures to raise attainment in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2?
- How consistent are marking and target-setting across the school?
- What impact has the new headteacher had in giving common purpose and direction to the school since its amalgamation?

Information about the school

Whitehouse is larger in size than most primary schools. It was amalgamated in April 2010 from the former infant and junior schools that once occupied its site. The headteacher joined the school at this time. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small number from minority ethnic groups. A very small minority of pupils are from the Traveller community. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high. Some pupils are on dual-placements with a local special school. The school has a Nursery as part of its Early Years Foundation Stage provision, offering morning and afternoon sessions. Breakfast clubs are run daily by the governing body. The school has gained national Healthy Schools status, the Activemark award and the Primary Science Quality Mark.

Since February 2011, the school has been undergoing a major refurbishment, which is due to continue until the summer of 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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Whitehouse Community Primary is a satisfactory school. It is improving in key areas, such as in the progress pupils make. Attainment is broadly average, but pupils perform better in English than in mathematics by the end of Year 6. This is because pupils struggle to apply their mathematical skills in solving problems based around real-life situations, and the whole-school calculation policy that was recently compiled and approved has not yet been implemented. Parents and carers are generally supportive of the school's work, including the one who said, 'My child continues to enjoy school life and is progressing very well.' They particularly value the good care, guidance and support the school offers.

Children make a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage from low starting points, achieving well in Nursery and Reception. Progress is satisfactory overall in Key Stages 1 and 2, although this year more pupils are beginning to make good progress, especially in Years 5 and 6. The quality of teaching varies. There is some very good practice, which is shared among colleagues, but also some teaching where the pace is lacking and the challenge is insufficient for more-able pupils. Pupils are given curriculum targets, but are not always sure how to reach them, as the approach to target-setting is inconsistent across different classes. Similarly, while some good examples of marking celebrate strengths and show pupils how to improve their work, this good practice is not sufficiently widespread.

The school's decision to revise its curriculum by giving greater prominence to core learning skills is having a beneficial impact on standards of literacy and pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils enjoy the whole-school topics and are becoming more involved in their own learning, even if this work is at an early stage. However, the presentation of pupils' work is often untidy, and not enough attention is paid to establishing neat handwriting across the school. Pupils say they feel safe at school, and parents and carers agree. Pupils have a good understanding of potential risks and how to avoid them. They take plenty of exercise, including making good use of the school's swimming pool, and know all about keeping healthy. Behaviour is good, and pupils are friendly. One pupil commented, 'When you are a newcomer you are made to feel very welcome.'

The headteacher has successfully brought the school together into a cohesive whole, and given it direction and momentum. Staff support her clear vision for driving forward improvement, and have taken on more responsibility, as well as being held accountable for their performance. Effective systems are used to track pupils' progress and to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, so that self-evaluation is accurate, and leaders and managers understand the school's strengths and areas to develop. Despite these strengths the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory, as many of the changes are still being established and their full impact is not yet evident.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics to at least the levels seen in English, by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise solving problems that are based on real-life experiences and presented in words
 - implementing the whole-school calculation policy so that all pupils are secure in their basic numeracy skills
 - ensuring that work challenges all pupils, but especially the more-able pupils, and that lessons are conducted at a brisk pace.
- Improve assessment by:
 - ensuring that marking always shows pupils what they have done well and how they can improve their work
 - establishing a consistent approach to setting pupils' targets so that they recognise the next steps in their learning and how to attain them.
- Implement a whole-school approach to handwriting to improve pupils' presentation of their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

All groups of pupils typically made satisfactory progress in the lessons observed during the inspection, including pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from the Traveller community. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early, and provided with appropriate individual education plans. Good support from experienced and skilful teaching assistants enables them to make progress in line with their classmates.

This year the school is providing more opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in lessons, and this was seen to good effect when Year 6 pupils made and marketed their own brand of biscuits. In some cases pupils made good progress when teaching really engaged them and the pace of learning was brisk. This was observed during a Year 5 mathematics lesson, as pupils in a lower-ability set found different ways of adding two-digit numbers together. Encouragement from the teacher enabled pupils to take risks and to make connections, so that they had a very positive experience. However, as yet not enough lessons have such good features.

Pupils enjoy their learning, as good attendance by many testifies, although overall attendance is only average because a very small number of pupils are absent for extended periods of time. Pupils benefit from a healthy tuck shop and make healthy choices at lunchtime. Through the sports partnership they sample a good variety of activities, including trampolining, hip-hop and cross-country running. Pupils are keen to take responsibility as lunch buddies for younger children, prefects and reading partners. They make a good contribution to the local community through litter-picking, helping to organise the summer fair and links with the local church and the elderly. They have established a fruitful partnership with the local museum, leading to an exciting project

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around the painting 'Knucklebones' by the artist Philip Steer. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as they have a good sense of right and wrong and take part in cultural events with other urban schools, meeting many pupils from backgrounds and cultures different from their own.

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	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?

Good relationships between adults and pupils lead to purposeful learning, as lesson objectives are clear and often backed up with criteria for pupils to assess how successful they have been. Planning is detailed and takes into account the range of pupils' abilities, although at times there is insufficient challenge for more-able pupils. Teachers' questioning is often effective in helping pupils reflect on their learning. Sometimes, where teaching is only satisfactory, introductions to lessons go on too long, slowing the pace of learning. While all pupils have curriculum targets, and many can say what they are, the extent to which they understand what they mean and how to achieve them varies. In some classes, pupils are not given enough information about how well they are meeting them. There is some unevenness in marking, with helpful comments for pupils about what they do well and how to improve their work in some books, but not in all. Teachers track pupils' progress well, and act promptly if they seem to be falling behind.

The curriculum has undergone considerable change in the past year and is improving. Pupils are more active in their learning, and find the topics more relevant and interesting.

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For example, a whole-school topic on castles involved some exciting visits (when pupils mistook a peal of thunder for a returning dragon's roar!) and opportunities for pupils to work with their parents and carers in building model castles at home. The focus on developing core learning skills is helping pupils to grow in confidence, for example in expressing a contrary opinion. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development through a varied programme of enrichment. During the inspection, a storyteller from the Traveller community enthralled pupils with tales from his childhood, and complimented them on being a 'smiley school'. Pupils' enjoyment of the curriculum is evident from their enthusiastic participation in activities and willingness to try new things. This work is at an early stage, and is still developing.

The pastoral care of pupils is good, especially in ensuring that those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable have every opportunity to thrive. The well-run breakfast clubs and nurture groups help pupils to socialise in a relaxed atmosphere and share any concerns. Pupils on dual-placement with a local special school are well supported, thanks to good joint working between the schools. The school works hard to promote attendance and has enjoyed some success in reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent, although a few remain. The school cares well for its high number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, enabling them to take a full part in lessons.

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 headteacher has rightly focused on establishing a caring ethos and uniting staff behind her strong vision for a rapidly improving school. The emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills is beginning to bear fruit, especially in raising standards in reading and writing, although the impact has been less marked in mathematics. The two deputy headteachers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and provide good support for the headteacher. Monitoring is regular and thorough, with staff often observing lessons in pairs and giving helpful feedback to teachers, which is followed-up carefully. This contributes towards strategic planning that has the right priorities, and concentrates on what is most important. Governance is satisfactory. A small group of experienced governors have supported the school well over a number of years. Others are fairly new, and there are four vacancies, especially for parents and carers. The governing body has played a key role in overseeing the amalgamation and in helping to project manage the refurbishment programme that is currently taking place. Governors monitor the work of the school regularly, and receive updates on progress on the school development plan. However, these activities do not always focus enough on strategic whole-school priorities.

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Good partnerships with a wide range of organisations make a positive contribution to pupils' learning, personal development and enjoyment of school. These include a curriculum partner who is advising the school on developing its core learning skills, the thriving sports partnership, and joint projects with other schools across Ipswich and further afield. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily, with good levels of inclusion and a robust stance against racism and harassment. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of provision, and in how well pupils perform, although the gap in attainment between English and mathematics is closing.

Safeguarding procedures are good, with a senior designated person attending almost 50 meetings this year to ensure those pupils whose circumstances may make them most vulnerable are kept safe. School staff have considerable experience and expertise in supporting pupils, and risk assessments are particularly well written. The school promotes community cohesion well. It is developing an exciting link with the national Olympic team of Azerbaijan, whose training base is in Ipswich. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to find out about cultures different from their own. The school knows its community well, and reaches out effectively to different groups within it, including the Traveller community. It is beginning to forge relationships with a small village school in a contrasting location.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
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

Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are usually lower than those expected for their age, especially in personal and social development and in their language and communication. A stimulating learning environment, with well-resourced open spaces, both inside and outside, excites and interests children and motivates them to find out new things. They are encouraged to be self-reliant and make their own choices, and have the freedom to work where best suits them. A good focus on developing early literacy and

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numeracy skills, and the establishment of clear routines, ensures that children make rapid progress in all areas of learning, but particularly in their personal and social development.

Adults have good relationships with the children, and good links with parents and carers. Most children behave well, and a consistent approach ensures that any incidents are dealt with promptly and fairly. Planning ensures that activities are purposeful and enjoyable for children. They loved learning to be driving instructors, and then conducting tests for those 'driving' the wheeled vehicles, complete with clipboards and tick sheets. Staff makes the work challenging, so that more-able children achieve well. Regular assessment builds up a clear picture of how children are progressing, but there is some variation in how effectively this is done between the Nursery and Reception classes. At times, insufficient evidence is kept to support the judgements that are being made. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well, with staff having a good understanding of how young children learn, and sharing ideas.

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

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was smaller than usual. Most are positive about the school's work, citing as particular strengths how well the school meets their child's particular needs and how well it is led and managed. Inspection findings support these views. A small number of parents and carers expressed concerns about the quality of lunchtime supervision and arrangements for pupils at home time. Inspectors found that a senior leader is always on the playground at lunchtime to ensure its smooth running, and that midday supervisors are subject to regular training and performance management to help improve their skills. While home time can be busy, with several classes leaving by the same exit, staff remain vigilant, and follow appropriate procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of all pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitehouse Community Primary 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 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 436 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	51	39	45	4	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	56	33	38	3	3	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	37	43	47	54	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	54	35	40	4	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	46	53	37	43	4	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	48	38	44	7	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	40	48	55	3	3	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)	40	46	42	48	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	37	51	59	2	2	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	37	41	47	5	6	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	32	49	56	5	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	46	53	39	45	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	53	36	41	4	5	1	1

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.



4 July 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitehouse Community Primary School, Ipswich IP1 5JN

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school, and for sharing your views with us, both in person when we met you and also through the questionnaires you completed. Whitehouse is a satisfactory school. It has some strengths and some things still to do to improve further. Here are some of the things it does well.

You told us you feel safe at school, and the staff do all they can to look after you.

You behave well, and are considerate to one another.

You have a good understanding of how to be healthy, and take plenty of exercise.

You make a valuable contribution to the school community through doing jobs and helping others. You also support your local community well.

There are plenty of visits and visitors for you to enjoy, and the school has good links with other organisations, such as the museum, to make your learning even more interesting.

The youngest children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Your reading and writing is improving, but some of you do not present your work very neatly. We have asked the school to help you with your handwriting. You are not doing quite so well in mathematics, so we have asked your teachers to give you plenty of word problems to solve, and to help you build up your numeracy skills. You all have targets, but some of you are not sure what they mean or how to reach them. We have asked your teachers to help you understand them, and to write more comments in your books that tell you what you are doing well and how you can improve. You can all help by taking care to work neatly, and asking if you do not understand a problem in mathematics.

Thank you again for your help. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nick Butt

Lead inspector

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