

Whitehills Primary School

Acre Lane, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, NN2 8DF

Inspection dates 9–10 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching in Key Stage 2, has not been good enough to ensure pupils, including those who need extra help, make good progress.
- Pupils' standards in writing have not improved to the same extent as they have in reading and mathematics.
- More-able pupils do not always make the best possible progress they could because the work teachers set for them is not sufficiently demanding.
- Some lessons are conducted at a slow pace and consequently a few pupils lose interest and their learning is therefore limited.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is variable. It does not always help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve, or provide them with regular opportunities to respond to teachers' comments.
- Although leaders, including the governing body, have taken the right action to ensure pupils in Years 3 to 6 are making progress at a faster rate than in the past, these improvements are not yet sustained over time.
- Leaders in charge of subjects do not always measure precisely the effectiveness of their actions on pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They say that they feel safe and are well looked after.
- Pupils' enjoy coming to school. Their attendance has been above average for three years and their levels of punctuality are good.
- The headteacher, governing body and other senior leaders are ambitious for the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Teaching is improving because leaders are strongly committed to providing staff with the guidance, training and time for their new skills to become fully embedded. Consequently, pupils in Key Stage 2 are now making better progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 15 teachers, and two assemblies. Four lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Short visits to observe the teaching of reading were made. Activities related to the teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs were also observed.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and members of the governing body. In addition, the lead inspector talked with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked with pupils, listened to them read and observed them at play during break and lunch times.
- The school’s safeguarding policies, improvement plans, notes from meetings of the governing body and records of pupils’ behaviour were reviewed. Inspectors also looked at the work pupils were doing in their books, and at records of their progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 10 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and looked at a summary of the school’s most recent consultations with parents and carers. Inspectors also sought the views of parents and carers at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Sarah Warboys, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Paul Heery	Additional Inspector
Michael Bucktin	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Whitehills Primary School is much larger than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- A well-below-average proportion of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding to the school. The funding is based on the number of children at the school in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action is above average. An average proportion of pupils are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school makes use of East Hunsbury Primary School for one day one a week to provide specialist resourced provision.
- The 'Jack-in-a Box' before- and after-school club operates on the school site. It is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain recent improvements in teaching, especially in Years 3 to 6, to raise pupils' achievement in reading, mathematics and in particular writing, by ensuring that all staff:
 - build on recent, successful strategies to plan interesting activities that inspire pupils to use their writing skills when learning about other subjects
 - set more demanding work in all lessons for those pupils that are more able
 - increase the pace of learning in lessons to help maintain pupils' interests
 - give pupils precise written feedback when marking their work and provide them with the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments, so they are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- Strengthen the school's leadership capacity by developing the skills of subject leaders in checking that their improvement strategies are raising pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- At the end of Year 6, pupils' standards in English and mathematics are average. Attainment for Key Stage 1 pupils has been consistently above national averages, thus indicating that historically, there has been underachievement in Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils making and exceeding the progress expected has been lower than that found nationally.
- All pupils, including those who need extra help, are now making better progress because of improved teaching. However, this is not yet sustained over time. Current assessment information shows that pupils in all year groups are on track to reach above average standards in reading and mathematics, though their attainment in writing remains average.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities below those expected for their age. They make good progress to reach average levels by the time they enter Y1. Adults provide plenty of interesting activities that help children to develop their skills. For example, they reinforce children's mathematical understanding in looking for repeated patterns and promote good levels of independence in encouraging children to help themselves to a healthy snack.
- Standards in reading have improved because phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) are taught systematically. Pupils learn reading and writing skills alongside each other. The teaching of specific reading skills continues throughout Key Stage 2. Teachers provide varied opportunities for pupils to use their reading, writing and mathematics skills when learning about other subjects. This approach has been successful in raising pupils' achievement.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making similar progress to other pupils from their various starting points. All adults effectively support those who need extra help in lessons. They break learning down into small, achievable steps so pupils can succeed. Activities are carefully planned which helps to fill specific gaps in their knowledge.
- The very few pupils who attend the specialist off-site provision make good progress whilst there.
- Additional funds in the form of the pupil premium are used to provide one-to-one tuition, reading support, access to visits and trips, music tuition, extra adult help and to provide training for staff. In 2012 the very few pupils eligible for the pupil premium achieved similar levels to these pupils nationally. However, compared to their classmates they were one term behind in English and in mathematics. For the pupils eligible for the pupil premium currently at the school, the attainment gap is closing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching in the past has not ensured that pupils in Key Stage 2 make sufficient progress. In response to improvements in teaching in all year groups, progress rates are much improved. Nevertheless, teaching requires improvement because it is not yet consistently good over time.
- In less effective lessons, teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient work to do. On these occasions, pupils become fidgety, lose interest and the pace of learning slows. On the whole, teachers plan activities for pupils which are matched to their different abilities. They adapt work in the light of pupils' understanding to meet their particular needs. Sometimes, the work that teachers set does not challenge pupils' thinking, particularly for more-able pupils, limiting the

progress they could make.

- Some pupils' work is carefully marked and provides pupils with helpful advice about how it could be improved. This is not the case in all classes. Not all pupils are given opportunities to respond to teachers' comments. Teachers' questions do not always help them to think more deeply so that their learning can keep moving forward.
- The best learning happens when teachers have high expectations of learning and behaviour. Adults are used consistently well to support the learning of different groups of pupils. When lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, all pupils, including those who need extra help, make progress at a good rate.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge leads to lessons that are planned well and combined with rich, purposeful opportunities for pupils to use English and mathematics skills when learning about other subjects. In Year 3, for example, pupils were able to think deeply about their own lives and what they mean to their families, teachers and friends while learning about different aspects of Hinduism. They eagerly shared their thoughts with each other before writing paragraphs to express their ideas.
- Across the school, teachers make good use of computer technology to engage pupils and this helps to maintain their interest. Video clips, for example, helped Year 2 pupils' to learn about nocturnal animals and digital photographs provided the stimulus to write instructions about how to create a model of a hedgehog.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a good balance of adult-led activities and those which children choose for themselves. Adults are skilled in observing children as they play, fostering their curiosity and turning their interests into learning opportunities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils attend school regularly and arrive punctually. Typically, their behaviour in lessons is good and the vast majority show positive attitudes. Pupils are keen to learn and do their best. They work well on their own, in small groups and with good levels of concentration. Pupils are supportive of one another. In Year 3, for example, they took turns to be the 'teacher' in describing how to find a fraction of an amount to each other. Such partner working helps pupils to explain and clarify their ideas.
- Working relationships between pupils and adults are good. Pupils are polite, helpful and show good manners around the school. Break times are actively organised and well-supervised without encroaching on pupils' independence. There is a lot for pupils to do outdoors and they make good use of the resources available to them, treating them with respect. Older pupils benefit from roles of responsibility such as those of 'playground pals', and wear their bright jackets with pride.
- Pupils say they feel safe, that adults are helpful and care for them. They show a good awareness of different types of bullying. Pupils report a few incidents of name-calling, but know how to seek help if needed. They have a thorough understanding of the school's systems for managing behaviour and say that it helps them to behave well. School records show that incidents of poor behaviour are rare.

- Occasionally, when the pace of learning slows in lessons, a very small number of pupils become restless, lose interest and go off-task.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders are focused on the right priorities, in particular on improving teaching. Some programmes and initiatives are relatively new. Therefore, it is too early to say whether the improvement in pupils' achievement will be maintained. Subject leaders are taking on more responsibility. Some are at the early stages of developing their skills in checking whether or not they have been effective in raising pupils' achievement.
- Leaders, including the governing body, have taken decisive action to address weaknesses in teaching. They have successfully halted the underachievement in Key Stage 2. Leaders at all levels demonstrate the capacity to secure further improvements.
- Led by a determined and enthusiastic headteacher, the school is moving forward at a good pace. His drive and ambition for the school comes through strongly. Under his guidance, the staff have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and are working well together to speed up pupils' achievement. The school is taking robust action to tackle any form of discrimination and to ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Teaching is improving because there is a concerted approach to developing and enhancing teachers' skills. Leaders provide precise feedback to teachers after watching them teach. They provide opportunities for staff through professional training. They are afforded time to develop and embed the new approaches and develop their skills.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is well-managed to ensure children have a good start to their school life.
- Those parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire and who spoke to inspectors are highly positive about the schools' work and recent improvements. The school works well with outside agencies, including with a specialist resource provision at a local primary school, to ensure that pupils with specific needs get the extra help they need.
- In discussion, pupils say that they appreciate the range of activities the school has on offer. These make a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' behaviour is linked closely to their social responsibilities and enhanced by their involvement in activities such as the 'Junior Wardens' work with the police. They learn about other cultures through links with Uganda, Qatar and France. Pupils enjoy participating in art, music and sport.
- The local authority has provided support for the school through regular reviews of its performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are aware that progress in Key Stage 2 has not been good enough in the past and that the improvement to teaching must be sustained. They are fully committed to the headteacher's aims of providing good quality professional development for staff. Governors have supported the headteacher in tackling weak teaching. Together, they make sure good teachers are rewarded and that pay progression is clearly linked to pupils' progress. Governors make regular visits to school, observing teaching and meeting with subject leaders to check on how well they are doing. Meeting notes show that governors provide challenge and support

for leaders. Governors manage the school's finances effectively, including the pupil premium, to ensure pupils receive the help they need. They are aware that those eligible for pupil premium funding are making accelerated progress to catch up with their classmates. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	121926
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	411948

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	404
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harvie Hughes
Headteacher	Robert Hardcastle
Date of previous school inspection	29 January 2009
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