

Whatfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Rectory Road, Whatfield, Ipswich, IP7 6QU

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This very small school has a 'can-do' attitude; being small is never used as an excuse, pupils enjoy a very wide range of stimulating activities that parents describe as 'amazing'.
- Whatever level they start at, the vast majority of pupils do well, particularly so in reading and mathematics, because they want to learn from the good teaching they receive.
- Less-able pupils do well because they receive extra help closely matched to their area of difficulty.
- The school rightly has a good reputation for meeting the different needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Pupils' behaviour is good because they have positive relationships with staff, who they know will look after them.
- Pupils say, and parents agree, that they feel safe in school.
- Pupils' social development is outstanding; from an early age, they are very patient and tolerant of one another, and readily help each other.
- The very enthusiastic and supportive parent body works closely with the school to see their children thrive.
- The headteacher and governors regularly check the quality of teaching and the standards of pupils' work. Both have improved since the last inspection. Staff form an effective team.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Writing tasks do not enthuse pupils to want to write, nor do they apply skills they learn to their general writing. More-able pupils sometimes have writing tasks that are too easy for them.
- Marking does make it clear to pupils what they have learnt and what they should focus on next. Pupils also have too few opportunities to learn how to judge their own work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons. The majority were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspector made other visits to classes, looked at pupils' workbooks and listened to a sample of pupils reading.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, the headteacher, other staff, governors, parents and carers, an independent consultant and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 31 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and four written responses. The inspector also spoke to a small number of parents. The responses to four staff questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' progress; planning and monitoring documentation; the school's self-evaluation; records of how the school uses its funding, especially how the money from pupil premium is spent; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.
- During this inspection, the inspector asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a very small primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British. The number of boys is nearly double that of girls.
- A large proportion of pupils come from outside the school's catchment area, and many of these join and leave the school partway through their primary education.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (the extra government funding for children looked after by the local authority, known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups) is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well above average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above average. In total, a little more than half the school's pupils are supported in this way.
- Pupils are taught in two classes. These are mixed-age classes, the youngest from Reception to Year 2, the eldest from Year 3 to Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards in writing by:
 - increasing the range and use of stimuli, such as drama, to enthuse pupils to write
 - ensuring that pupils apply the writing skills they learn to their creative writing and writing in other subjects
 - ensure the more able pupils always make good progress by working at the right level of difficulty.
- Improve the quality and impact of marking and assessment by:
 - establishing clear and consistent expectations of teachers' marking
 - evaluating how far pupils' work meets the lesson's success criteria so pupils have a clear understanding of how they have done
 - clearly specifying the next steps pupils need to take to improve their work
 - showing pupils how to evaluate their own and each other's work and routinely planning opportunities for them to give each other feedback.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with a very wide range of skills and experiences that, overall, are below those expected for their age.
- Each year group is very small, typically around five pupils. The make-up of the different groups varies greatly, too. In some, every pupil has special educational needs, in others none. Comparisons between year groups are consequently unhelpful. Pupils' progress is tracked very closely and shows that, from their very different starting points, the vast majority of pupils make good progress through the school, although not all pupils with special educational needs reach the level expected for their age. Those who join partway through their primary education do equally well because they are well cared for, quickly 'find their feet', and flourish.
- Over half of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs, a very high proportion. These pupils do well because they receive extra lessons, often with teaching assistants, carefully targeted at the area they struggle with.
- More-able pupils do well when they are given tasks at the right level. These pupils' needs are identified in 'challenge plans' shared with parents so they, too, can support learning. This is beneficial. In mathematics, they often learn more advanced work alongside older pupils, and so make fast progress. This is not the case in writing.
- Pupils with no known special educational need do well, learn at a faster rate than expected and make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- There are not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals to comment on their attainment without identifying them. Additional funding is spent effectively to give these pupils extra support when they need it and opportunities they might otherwise not have had. Throughout the school, they do as well or better than their peers in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Reading standards are particularly good because school and parents work closely together. Well-attended information sessions mean parents know how, for example, the school teaches pupils to link letters to the sounds they make (phonics). As a result, pupils are taught at school and guided at home identically. In the Year 1 national screening, phonics skills are above average.
- Pupils also do well because the range of lessons and subjects interests them and arouses their curiosity to learn. Parents say that pupils who may struggle academically feel a sense of accomplishment when, for example, they harvest plants in their allotment. However, insufficient use is made of these real and vivid experiences to stimulate pupils' writing.
- Basic skills are generally good, although pupils do not routinely apply their learning in discrete grammar, punctuation and spelling lessons to their general writing. Handwriting has improved since the last inspection.

The quality of teaching is good

- Fundamental to the good teaching is the very warm and positive relationship between staff and pupils; staff rarely have to ask twice for attention.

- Technology is used effectively to 'grab' pupils' interest at the start of an activity, and to give a visual stimulus for the learning, such as when photographs of themselves outdoors are used to encourage them to express themselves verbally.
- Questioning is used to prompt pupils' thinking. In science lessons, for example, this provokes lively group discussion so pupils learn from each other.
- Each lesson has a clear objective shared with pupils. Older pupils see the week's 'learning journey' so they know what to expect and how each lesson builds on the last and prepares for the next. They say this helps their learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a good and increasing range of techniques and expertise so they guide and teach disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs well.
- Very good use is made of particular expertise and skill of staff, outside specialists and volunteers including parents in a wide range of areas, including sport, cooking and French.
- Homework reinforces and practises skills learnt in school and includes research or project-type tasks such as the summer holiday 'diary project' recording their adventures and activities, that parents say their children particularly enjoy.
- Good organisation and thorough planning enables teachers to be effective when teaching a wide age and ability range. In the most successful lessons, every pupil is purposefully engaged in learning. For example, in the older class, while the teacher explained what was to be done with one group, a teaching assistant led another and other pupils studied at an individual level using a computer program. When the teacher finished, groups rotated. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Occasionally, however, all groups listen to every group's introduction. When this occurs, some, largely boys, lose interest because of the time taken, and enthusiasm is lost.
- The marking policy is not used fully or consistently, so the quality of feedback to pupils varies, and their understanding of what they have mastered and what they need to do to move their learning on. Pupils' comments on their own work, or that of others, is relatively rare and brief. As a result, they are not developing the skills to evaluate and therefore improve their own work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' participation in group work is excellent. They listen to one another, often waiting patiently while one pupil clarifies his or her thinking, share tasks willingly and take pride in the group's success.
- Pupils look out for one another: whatever they are doing, they make sure that no-one is left out or lonely.
- Parents agree that the vast majority of pupils behave well. Pupils are generally tolerant of the very small number of pupils who sometimes struggle to manage their own behaviour.
- Pupils have a good understanding of safety; for example, when working in the outdoors or using the internet.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who join partway through their primary education quickly settle and build positive relationships with staff. This ensures that they are ready to learn.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is particularly strong because pupils are given every opportunity to reflect on their feelings and the world around them.
- Pupils' opinions are valued. Staff try to incorporate pupils' interests into their teaching and governors regularly ask them what they think, for example of the way the school teaches reading, and incorporate this in their decision-making.
- Pupils enjoy school and want to learn, so their attendance is above the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, staff and governors share a strong commitment to drive the school forward; always with the central focus of raising pupils' standards.
- The headteacher regularly checks the quality of teaching; an improvement since the last inspection. Regular discussions centre on how each pupil is progressing, so no-one gets left behind and extra help is given in the right areas.
- High-quality staff training is at the heart of many improvements because it is seen as relating directly to improving teaching and accelerating pupils' progress. Staff engage in research, try new ideas, check their impact and regularly share their thoughts.
- The breadth of the curriculum is extensive. Clear plans are in place to use extra physical education funds to further widen opportunities. These include 'hands-on' and outdoor activities, particularly to interest the relatively high proportion of boys.
- Whatfield is a fully inclusive school. No limit is placed on any pupil, whether they struggle or excel. All are encouraged, all share similar opportunities. One parent said, 'You might think our children will be at a disadvantage going to high school from such a small school, but because there are so few, right from a very young age they have had to take part in everything and they are very self confident.'
- The school works very closely with parents and carers to the benefit of pupils' learning. For example, a mid-year report card gives parents an easy-to-read summary of key areas such as attainment so they can support their children better. Parents like it that staff keep them fully informed about their children's progress and involve them immediately with any concerns. One parent said, 'If my child isn't doing well, they don't wait till the end of the year report, they tell me straight away so I can help put it right.'
- Partnerships with other schools are very beneficial. Staff share ideas, challenges and potential solutions among schools. Advice is sought from high schools for particularly able pupils. Pupils work and play alongside those with whom they will go to high school, and make new friends.
- Following the last inspection, the local authority has linked the school with other schools judged good and supported the school to improve. For example, the area for the youngest children is much improved and the school has a stronger focus on raising attainment, although the majority

of this help is from a distance. Training provided is seen as very useful, too.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is effective because it has reorganised to be more efficient, using individual expertise and experience effectively. Governors know their school thoroughly because they visit regularly with predetermined focus, and question the school closely about what they see. Governors have a good grasp of performance management and encourage staff training. Pay is now linked to performance. Standards drive everything they do. Data is used well to check pupils' progress and see finance is carefully allocated and monitored, including specific sums such as pupil premium. Governors carefully check and ensure that the school meets national requirements, including for pupils' safeguarding.

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	124718
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	425299

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Clark
Headteacher	Lynne Golding
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2011
Telephone number	01473 823309
Email address	whatfieldcps@talk21.com

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