

INSPECTION REPORT

WHITLEY VILLAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lower Whitley, Warrington

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 110997

Headteacher: Mrs D Strange

Reporting inspector: Mr J White
17242

Dates of inspection: 14th – 15th January 2002

Inspection number: 243317

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior School
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Village Lane Lower Whitley Warrington Cheshire
Postcode:	WA4 4QH
Telephone number:	01925 730230
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr S Swinden
Date of previous inspection:	8 th December 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
17242	J White	Registered inspector
13526	R Barnard	Lay inspector
18537	S Derrick	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

SES
132 Whitaker Road
Derby
DE23 6AP

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is located in the village of Whitley, near to Warrington in Cheshire. Pupils are drawn from a wide area. Ninety pupils are on the school's roll (38 boys, 52 girls), a larger figure than at the time of the last inspection but much smaller than other primary schools. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. All pupils are white and none has English as an additional language. Twenty-four pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is about the national average, and one has a statement. These figures have risen since the last inspection. Children are admitted into the reception year in the September preceding their fifth birthday and most have attended a nursery. Of the eleven children in the reception year only four live in the local area. Assessments of their attainment on entry to the school indicate that it was broadly average. However, attainment in the previous reception year was above average. The school now has four classes, there were three at the time of the last inspection. The headteacher teaches one of the infant classes for most days of the week.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school continues to be very effective. High standards in English, mathematics and science are achieved by the age of eleven. A high proportion of the teaching is very good or better. The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead the school very well. The school is a harmonious community in which pupils work hard and feel valued. Their attitudes are excellent. Good value for money is provided.

What the school does well

- Because of very good or better teaching, high standards are being achieved in English and mathematics by the ages of seven and eleven.
- Pupils' attitudes to the school are excellent. They are keen to do well and feel valued. By the age of eleven they are mature and confident learners.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very effective leadership.

What could be improved

- Planning for the school's future direction is not as clear as it could be.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1998 and was judged to be a very good school. It has continued to be successful. The key issues raised by the last inspection have been addressed well: assessment procedures, the use of assessment findings and the accommodation have all improved. There have been other improvements; for example, children in the reception year are now provided with more regular physical activities. Overall standards in the national tests at seven and eleven have risen since 1998 and the school's statutory targets in English and mathematics were exceeded in 2001.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A*	A	A	A
mathematics	A*	B	A*	A*
science	A*	B	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The results show that, taking the three years 1999 to 2001 together, pupils' performance in all three subjects well exceeded the national average for pupils aged eleven. Although the school's trend in performance appears to have been fairly static, the variations in performance need treating with caution because the numbers in Year 6 have been small. Since 1998 pupils' average performance has risen in all three subjects. In mathematics in 2001, pupils' performance was in the range of the top five percent of schools. The overall results in 2001 compared very favourably with those in similar schools. These high standards are reflected in the work of the current Year 6 pupils and they are achieving well. In the national tests for seven-year-olds, pupils' average results have risen since 1999. In the 2001 tests standards were high in writing and, in reading and mathematics, pupils' performance was in the top five percent of schools across the country. Pupils' performance in science teacher assessments was very high compared with the national average. Pupils in the current Year 2 are achieving well and standards are high especially in literacy and numeracy. This Year group is not as able as last year's. Children in the reception year are making good progress and are well on course to exceed the standards expected when they enter Year 1 in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and personal, social and emotional development. By the ages of seven and eleven pupils have made good progress, including those with special educational needs and the most able.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are excellent throughout the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good overall. Pupils show especially high levels of self-discipline in the playground and at lunchtimes.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils respond very well to opportunities to help others, take initiative and be responsible. Relationships are harmonious.
Attendance	The attendance rate is very high compared with other schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The teaching is never less than satisfactory and is especially effective in literacy and numeracy in the infant years and in the upper juniors. The teaching of writing is excellent in Years 5 and 6. Other strengths in the teaching include high expectations, well managed discussions and very clear explanations. In general, the range of pupils' needs is met well but on occasion in the lessons in the lower junior class more could have been expected of the most able pupils. Pupils throughout the school are keen to do well. By Year 6 their knowledge of their own learning is very good. In the reception class, the teacher and children cope very well with the lack of space.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall but the lack of space in the reception class especially restricts children's creative development.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good in the main.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is very good. Pupils' moral and social development is promoted particularly strongly.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are very well cared for.

The school's strong community spirit was exemplified in an assembly, introduced by a Year 6 pupil, in which pupils of all ages, including the youngest, confidently presented their achievements and answered questions asked by other pupils. In discussion with inspectors, many pupils indicated how much they thought the headteacher and staff cared for them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very effective leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities, are committed to high standards and support the school well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory and developing, but not yet thorough enough.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used well but there is room for improvement in strategic planning. The accumulated budget surplus is too high.

The principles of best value are applied soundly.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • Children are being helped to become mature and responsible. Behaviour is good. • The teaching is good and children are expected to work hard. • The school is well led and managed. 	

The vast majority of parents who expressed a view were very positive about the school. There were very few points of dissatisfaction. The inspectors endorse parents' positive views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Because of very good or better teaching, high standards are being achieved in English and mathematics by the ages of seven and eleven.

- 1 Children's skills in speaking, listening and literacy are developed well in the reception class and they are making good progress towards exceeding the standards expected on entry to Year 1. Children are being taught to listen carefully to adults and each other and to take turns when they are speaking to the whole class. The teacher's calm encouragement is helping them to talk confidently and eagerly. They have positive attitudes towards learning to read and are very interested in books. The teaching of letter sounds is very clear and helps children attempt to read unfamiliar words. They accurately write letters corresponding to given sounds and reassemble letters to make words such as *help* and *away*. Many read common, simple words accurately and identify missing words in a text, for example, in a version of the story of Three Little Pigs. The most able children are reading much of a simple text accurately. The teacher's very good teaching of handwriting is helping children not only to form letters accurately but also to recognise when capital letters are required.
- 2 In a very effective lesson in the Year 1/ 2 class pupils demonstrated their very good speaking and listening skills when they discussed different elements of the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. The teacher managed the discussion very well and gave pupils the opportunity to discuss, in small groups, the characters, settings and events in the story. Pupils responded very well and all had the chance to contribute in the subsequent whole-class discussion. The teacher's very clear use of English and encouraging manner helped pupils to offer their ideas confidently and to use a good range of vocabulary. Expectations were high, for example, in pupils' use and understanding of punctuation. Work was well planned to meet the needs of both age groups and writing tasks were well linked to the reading activities. For example, some of the Year 2 pupils considered how to add interest to the story by using a range of alternatives to the word *went*. A scrutiny of Year 2 pupils' writing indicates that they are taught very well. They have made good progress and write for a range of purposes. They have good opportunities to write in other subjects, for instance in history. Many write independently and make good attempts at using punctuation. High attaining pupils use a good range of vocabulary. Their developing skill in using punctuation includes accurate speech marks. Word processing skills are developing well. Year 2 pupils heard to read during the inspection were interested in their reading and most used a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words.
- 3 The teaching of English is excellent in the Year 5/ 6 class and pupils are achieving at least high standards. In an outstanding lesson pupils of all abilities contributed very well in reading and discussing the novel "Tom's Midnight Garden". The vast majority of pupils read very well and showed mature understanding of the novel's characters and events. They also used contextual cues well in order to establish the meaning of unfamiliar words, such as *languid*. The teacher's challenging questions on the text enabled pupils to evaluate confidently the author's style and use of language. The whole-class discussion was managed very effectively and relationships were excellent. The pace and challenge in their learning were considerable. Pupils settled very quickly to the high challenge in the subsequent tasks in reading and writing. All pupils worked very diligently and maintained thorough concentration throughout. For example, some of the Year 6 pupils silently read a different text to compare how the authors dealt with the theme of time. Year 6 pupils' writing indicates that almost all of

them achieve high standards. The range of writing is broad and includes poetry, stories, reports, biographies and autobiographies. Word processing is a strong feature and work is very well presented, often in attractive compilations of pupils' writing. Pupils often make very expressive use of language, for example; *"As the moon shimmered the silver spider waited anxiously on his gossamer thread"*. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to write in other subjects. In geography, taught by a part-time teacher, pupils' writing about land rights demonstration in India is well argued and evokes the location well. Year 6 pupils heard to read during the inspection did so confidently. They talked well about their reading and most expressed their preferences for particular authors. Effective marking and setting of targets are helping Year 2 and Year 6 pupils to make progress and be more aware of their own learning.

- 4 Good foundations in children's mathematical development are laid in the reception class. In a very good lesson the teacher's high expectations helped the children to improve their knowledge and understanding of 10 and multiples of 10. The children counted accurately to 50. The teacher also clearly introduced and explained the use of a pictogram to record some simple data. Pupils achieve well in number in the Year 1/2 class. Their knowledge and understanding of place value are good. In a very effective lesson, after some brisk mental work, pupils worked on different tasks involving money operations. Expectations were high and almost all Year 2 pupils achieved at an above average level. Their mental recall of number facts was good as they worked with amounts more than £1, and they used the decimal point correctly. They were also given good opportunity to explain their work and did so clearly. A particular strength in the teaching was that pupils' work became increasingly more difficult as the lesson progressed. This ensured that pupils were kept on their toes. Consequently their learning was very good. Year 2 pupils' completed work indicates that they are regularly challenged sufficiently, especially in number, and achieve well. For example, many are beginning to recognise simple fractions. High expectations are also a significant feature in the work of the upper juniors. In an excellent lesson Year 6 pupils showed their very good knowledge and understanding of number including negative numbers. They used mathematical language very well when they gave mature explanations of their thinking. Pupils' work also includes converting fractions to decimals and percentages and regular solving of problems.

Pupils' attitudes to the school are excellent. They are keen to do well and feel valued. By the age of eleven they are mature and confident learners

- 5 Throughout the school, pupils are keen learners and show excellent attitudes not only to their work but also at lunchtimes, in assemblies and at breaktimes. Children in the reception year have only been in the school for just over a term but already apply themselves to their work very well. They settle quickly at the start of sessions and sensibly collect and tidy away equipment. They cope very well with the lack of space and their behaviour is very good. They respond sensibly to opportunities to work independently but also co-operate well, for example, when working in pairs using a computer. Pupils' enthusiasm, very good behaviour, active participation and diligence are significant features of the very good or better lessons. In the literacy and numeracy lessons in the Year 1/2 class pupils responded very well to the opportunities to work in pairs or small groups. Pupils in the Year 3/4 class have very positive attitudes. Most work diligently but a few do not sustain concentration throughout lessons. Pupils in the Year 5/6 class are especially confident in lessons and around the school. In discussion with inspectors they showed considerable maturity as they articulately expressed their views about the school and talked about their work. They had nothing but praise for the staff of the school. When asked what

they would remember about the school one pupil replied; “*The people, I feel comfortable here*”. The upper junior pupils respond very well to the opportunities to take responsibility, for example, they help with younger pupils in the playground, undertake a range of duties at lunchtimes and lead assemblies.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very effective leadership.

- 6 The headteacher and deputy headteacher both carry a heavy load. Apart from her leadership and management duties the headteacher also teaches a class for four days a week and is the co-ordinator for science and information and communication technology. The deputy headteacher, apart from teaching a class, is also responsible for English, physical education and special educational needs. The headteacher and her deputy are strongly committed to the school and work very hard. They are very open to new ideas and are constructively self-critical. The teaching and non-teaching staff are well led and all work well as a team. Decisions are made by consensus. The headteacher and deputy have worked hard to sustain or improve high standards. The school has continued to improve since it was last inspected. Pupils’ progress is monitored well, trends are identified and action taken. A good example is the school’s relatively recent drive to raise standards in writing. Pupils’ writing has been analysed closely and pupils have been given clear and precise targets. For example, in the deputy’s class targets include “*use interesting connectives*”. As a result Year 6 pupils’ knowledge of their own learning is very good. A very strong lead is given in developing the school’s excellent ethos. The emphasis is on praise for pupils, developing their self-discipline and celebrating their achievements. As a result the school’s community spirit is very strong. The headteacher is highly regarded by the pupils and knows them very well. The vast majority of parents who expressed a view are very happy with the leadership of the school.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Planning for the school’s future direction is not as clear as it could be.

- 7 The school development plan has clear annual objectives for the curriculum, premises and personnel. The plan usefully includes success criteria, in-service training, resources, costs and the people involved. The plan is regularly discussed by the governors and is evaluated before the next annual plan is devised. Its weakness is that it does not look beyond a year so the governors’ vision for the school’s future is not clear. In addition, the objectives’ longer-term implications, especially for teaching and learning, are not considered sufficiently. For example, there is no indication of expected learning outcomes as a result of implementing the objective “to integrate the use of ICT into numeracy and science”. The chair of governors is aware that the budget surplus has grown too large and minutes of the governors’ meetings indicate that governors have appropriate plans for spending the money. Resources are used productively but the governors should ensure that the link between the development plan and the budget is tighter so that not only will any budget surplus be kept at an acceptable level but the plan will also indicate how it will be spent.
- 8 The headteacher has recognised the need for monitoring of teaching and learning in order to identify strengths and weaknesses. For example, the development plan indicates that during the current school year lessons will be observed in literacy and numeracy. However, there is no longer-term planning. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher have undertaken some monitoring of lessons in literacy and numeracy. They have used a suitable format for recording their observations, which

have been discussed with the teachers concerned. Governors have adopted a year group and have spent time in classrooms, for example, in observing literacy and numeracy. It is unrealistic in this small school to expect the headteacher and her deputy to do much more unless they are given more time away from their class teaching duties. For example, the deputy has an inadequate amount of non-teaching time to monitor provision for special educational needs or to perform her duties as a deputy. There are good aspects of the teaching in the Year3/ 4 class but also some room for improvement. However, the level of support that can be provided is very much dependant on the headteacher or deputy's available time. Governors now need to develop a more creative approach towards giving the headteacher and deputy more support.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

9 The governors and headteacher should:

(1) Improve the school development plan by:

- outlining the school's future direction for at least a three year period;
- tightening the link between expenditure and educational priorities;
- identifying more precisely, the expected outcomes for teaching and learning;
- considering ways in which the headteacher and deputy headteacher can be given more time to undertake their leadership and management duties.

(Paragraphs: 7 and 8)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	12
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	10

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	3	3	3	-	-	-
Percentage	25	25	25	25	-	-	-

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than eight percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	90
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	24

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	2.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.2
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	12	7	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	18	18	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	95 (93)	95 (93)	100 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	-	-	-
	Total	18	18	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	95 (93)	95 (93)	100 (93)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Results for boys and girls are omitted where there are less than eleven pupils in either group.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	-
Black – African heritage	-
Black – other	-
Indian	-
Pakistani	-
Bangladeshi	-
Chinese	-
White	79
Any other minority ethnic group	-

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.45
Average class size	22.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	-
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	-
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	-

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	-	-
Black – African heritage	-	-
Black – other	-	-
Indian	-	-
Pakistani	-	-
Bangladeshi	-	-
Chinese	-	-
White	-	-
Other minority ethnic groups	-	-

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	262,071
Total expenditure	229,475
Expenditure per pupil	2,342
Balance brought forward from previous year	27,131
Balance carried forward to next year	59,727

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	90
Number of questionnaires returned	40

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	43	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	38	8	5	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	38	3	3	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	53	13	3	0
The teaching is good.	55	40	0	3	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	40	10	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	30	8	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	28	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	50	40	10	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	63	28	0	3	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	43	3	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	40	8	3	5