



# Whitehall Nursery and Infant School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 104163  
**LEA** Walsall  
**Inspection number** 277089  
**Inspection dates** 15 November 2005 to 16 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** John Carnaghan RISP

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant	<b>School address</b>	West Bromwich Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Walsall
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 7		West Midlands WS1 3HS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 721991
<b>Number on roll</b>	293	<b>Fax number</b>	01922 647498
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Janet Richmond
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 May 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Susan Speed

<b>Age group</b> 3 to 7	<b>Inspection dates</b> 15 November 2005 - 16 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 277089
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by a team of three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The school is much larger than most nursery and infant schools. It serves a very disadvantaged part of Walsall. There is an above average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. More than three quarters of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Two thirds of pupils do not speak English as their first language; about a quarter of this group of pupils are at an early stage in learning English. The headteacher took up her post in April 2005.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 4**

The school provides an inadequate education for its pupils and gives unsatisfactory value for money. The school also views its effectiveness as inadequate. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and achievement, teaching and learning, attendance and accommodation.

Following sweeping changes introduced by the new headteacher, the school is now well aware of its weaknesses. There is a crystal clear vision about what needs doing and great determination to improve. These changes are starting to show in better achievement and standards. While improvement since the last inspection is inadequate, the 'wind of change' sweeping through the school means that its capacity for future improvement is good.

Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is inadequate. Weak teaching is resulting in very low standards. In the rest of the school, standards have been very low for years. Progress overall is inadequate and is particularly poor for pupils of white British origin. The quality of support for pupils whose first language is not English has enabled these children to make better progress, but it is still not good enough. Teaching is inadequate because too many lessons are dull and unchallenging. Attendance is below average, largely because pupils frequently take holidays in term time. The school building desperately needs modernization to enable pupils to learn better.

The school has some strengths. It checks its performance thoroughly and acts decisively on this information. It fosters warm relationships and pupils are encouraged to be healthy. Attitudes and behaviour are good and children like their school. It provides a calm, safe environment. Teachers know each child well, recording progress thoroughly. The school has strong links with the local community. There are good links with parents, and they regard the school highly.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

Raise standards and improve achievement through maintaining a clear emphasis on meeting each individual's learning needs. Improve teaching and learning through raising expectations and delivering interesting and challenging lessons. Continue efforts to improve attendance. Develop accommodation further to provide a better learning environment.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Standards are very low and the school agrees that pupils' progress is inadequate. Children enter the Nursery with skills well below those normally found at their age. Many children have particularly weak language and communication skills. Inadequate

teaching in the Reception class results in children's unsatisfactory achievement. Children start Year 1 with very low standards.

Inadequate teaching in Years 1 and 2 does not get to grips with pupils' learning needs. In consequence, despite pupils' positive attitudes, they do not make the progress they should. In 2004, national test results for Year 2 pupils were very low; in 2005 they fell again. Writing standards are exceptionally low.

Achievement between different groups of pupils varies. In recent tests, those of Pakistani origin did best and underachieved less than other pupils. The support given to pupils for whom English is not their first language has benefited their progress. White British pupils make the slowest progress.

Recently, the school has recognised that levels of achievement are unacceptably low and has set about seeking improvements. The school has started to provide the support required to enable each child to blossom. The success is evident in the improving standards of reading, writing and mathematics. Throughout the school, children's progress, since the start of the school year, has been at least satisfactory due to some improved teaching. The school's prediction of higher standards in the coming months is well founded. The school uses assessment information well to set challenging targets.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children are aware of what is right and wrong and the differences that exist between cultures.

Attendance is below average, mainly because parents take their children on extended holidays during the term. However, due to the school's efforts, attendance levels are improving and children really enjoy coming to school. They are well behaved, courteous and feel safe in school, reporting little bullying. If they have problems, they are confident that staff will help them.

Children know they should adopt healthy lifestyles. They explain what constitutes a healthy diet and recognise the importance of exercise. Children particularly enjoy the regular opportunities for exercise provided both during and after school. However, the school canteen does not support healthy eating.

Children make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider community. For example, the choir regularly sings at locations in the town. Children are responsive to the needs of others, willingly raising funds for charities. They readily take responsibilities in class. The school council members take their roles seriously and are keen to see improvements in toilets and playground equipment.

The weak development of skills does not prepare children well for the next stage of education.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall, although there are some positive features. Too many lessons do not promote pupils' progress well enough and teaching can be routine and dull. Expectations of pupils are too low and lessons do not meet the range of pupils' learning needs. In weaker teaching, resources, including teaching assistants, are not effectively deployed, and activities are frequently repetitive. The lack of quiet areas makes support teaching difficult. Pupils are keen to work and they listen attentively. However, the pace of lessons can be slow and this has depressed progress.

In better lessons, pupils' learning needs are recognised and their progress is fostered. This is particularly true in Year 2, where information from regular checks on progress in English and mathematics is used to boost achievement and improve standards. However, better teaching is by no means universal so it has yet to lift achievement across the school.

Assessment information is used well to group children according to their particular needs. Support teachers and assistants help learners who are at an early stage in speaking English, so that their progress is encouraged. They use a range of strategies; for example in an end-of-day story time, a support teacher provided a simultaneous Urdu translation so all children could enjoy the tale of *The Pig in the Pond*. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are equally well supported.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, provision for information and communication technology has improved and initiatives for literacy and personal, social and health education are being successfully implemented. Adult support and the availability of resources during afternoon playtime encourage children to develop physical skills, like skipping.

In the Nursery and Reception classes the curriculum covers all areas of learning, but provision for physical development is weaker as the outdoor playground is currently being developed. Planning in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and appropriate work is provided for pupils with additional needs.

Most children participate in the wide range of out-of-school activities offered, such as games, dance and choir. The limited accommodation restricts the teaching of groups of children who need support.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

The care pupils receive is satisfactory. Child protection procedures are thorough and staff are alert to signs that any pupil may be distressed or anxious. The very few

bullying incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively and the supervision of children at playtimes is well organised and vigilant.

Pupils work in a safe environment. Safety checks and risk assessments are regularly carried out. Pupils are routinely reminded of the need for care and awareness of others, for example in physical education lessons.

Children's work is well marked and contains friendly comments that many children say they find helpful. Pupils have targets to help them improve their work. However, discussions with pupils reveal that in most subjects they are unclear about precisely what they should do to make better progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

While leadership and management as a whole are satisfactory, that of the headteacher is good. On appointment, she perceptively identified areas requiring immediate improvement. For example, her careful monitoring of teaching and learning has shown teachers ways in which to improve their practice and raise standards. This is starting to have an impact. The school's self-evaluation is very good and because of this, in the short time since the headteacher took over, there have been demonstrable improvements in standards, teaching, accommodation and expectations. However, there remains much to do.

Governance is satisfactory. Encouraged by the headteacher, governors' understanding and involvement in the school have grown in the last six months. The chair of governors and headteacher have written a helpful guide to support new governors in getting to grips with their responsibilities. Governors are increasingly aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but they do not challenge the school enough to improve standards. Parents and pupils are carefully consulted about changes in the school.

Accommodation is inadequate, despite numerous recent improvements. The hall is too small, toilets need refurbishment and there are few spaces for small groups to be taught separately. The school also suffers from poor heating, lighting and acoustics.

The school currently has significant weaknesses. However, the accurate analysis and energy of the headteacher, together with the staff and governors' clearer understanding of what the school has to do to change things for the better, now show that the school has a good capacity for improvement.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	4	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	4	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	NA

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

The Children Whitehall Nursery and Infant School West Bromwich Road Walsall WS1 3HS

17 November 2005

Dear Children

Thank you very much for welcoming the inspectors when we visited you. We really enjoyed talking with you and finding out about what happens in your school.

We know that you feel happy and safe at school because you and your parents told us. But we do think that the school has to make some important improvements before it is good enough. Luckily, the changes for the better have already started.

What we most liked about your school:

You greeted us warmly, with a friendly smile. You get on very well with your teachers and with one another, and your behaviour is good. Your headteacher knows you well and is working hard to sort out the school's problems.

What we have asked your school to do now:

It needs to continue trying to improve your standards of work. It must make sure that all lessons keep you interested and busy. It should keep up its good work in making sure that you come to school as often as you can.

Once again, thank you for helping us during the inspection.

Best wishes for the future.

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector