



Whitehills Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121926
LEA Northamptonshire
Inspection number 281132
Inspection dates 1 February 2006 to 2 February 2006
Reporting inspector Andrew McDowall HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Acre Lane
School category	Community		Northampton
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Northamptonshire NN2 8DF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01604 843780
Number on roll	489	Fax number	01604 842070
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Harvie Hughes
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Marianne Oakes

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school serving an area of mainly private housing in the northern suburbs of Northampton. Since the last inspection the school has changed from being a lower school to being a primary school. This caused the school to grow in size and has resulted in most of the older children being taught in temporary classrooms. Plans are well advanced to remodel the school to improve the present accommodation. The number of children identified as having learning difficulties is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. The school's evaluation of itself is generally accurate. Aspects of its work are good, but it is not yet good overall because achievement is only satisfactory. When they start school most children have average skills and abilities and make satisfactory progress in the reception classes and Years 1 to 6. Throughout the school, standards are broadly average, although some children who are capable of reaching the higher levels do not do so. The school is taking action to improve achievement. The recent change to the way writing is taught and assessed is having a positive impact on the performance of all the children, including those who should reach the higher standards. This is not yet the case for mathematics.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has led the school well in its transition from a lower school to a primary school. However, the way in which progress is checked and evaluated is insufficiently rigorous to enable the leadership of the school to have a clear picture of how each child is getting on in their work.

The children respond very well to the wide range of interesting activities the teachers plan for them. Behaviour and attendance are good. The children are knowledgeable about what they need to do to stay healthy and enjoy their education. Teaching is satisfactory. The teachers know the children well and relationships in the classrooms are good. Some of the work set is not challenging enough to stretch the brighter children. The school has successfully addressed the issues from the last inspection. It provides satisfactory value for money and the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of the more able children by ensuring the recently introduced initiatives maintain their early effectiveness in English, and introduce similar strategies in mathematics.
- Provide more time for the subject coordinators to check on the progress children are making to ensure all children are being stretched at all times.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. When they start at the school the children have knowledge and skills that are average for their age. They make satisfactory progress in the reception classes and most children reach the expected standard by the end of their first year in school. The children make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6. Most children reach the expected standard in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave. Children with learning difficulties also make satisfactory progress. However, some of the children who are capable of reaching the higher levels in English at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 do not do so. This particularly applies to standards in writing. Recently introduced systems are improving this, and the work in

children's books indicates that the more able children are now making satisfactory progress in English. More needs to be done in mathematics as too few children reach the higher level in mathematics by the time they leave Year 2. At present the targets the school sets itself are not challenging enough. This is lowering expectations of what some children can achieve. Standards in art are very good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The children's personal development is good. Children are really happy in school, as shown by their punctuality and regular attendance. They find the varied range of activities provided for them interesting and fun to do. They get on very well with other children and respect the staff. Children from Year 2 upwards show maturity when undertaking the many different tasks around the school. Their behaviour is good. Bullying is rare and children confirm that the staff deal effectively with any incidents that may occur.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies and class discussions enable them to develop respect for themselves and others. Children have a good understanding of right and wrong and show care and consideration for each other. The excitement generated in lessons often promotes a sense of wonder in the children. Their cultural awareness is enhanced by work in art and music, though opportunities to understand life in multicultural Britain are more limited. Children's understanding about living healthily is good and many parents are supporting the school well by providing healthy foods in their children's lunch boxes. The children's satisfactory academic progress prepares them appropriately for the next stages in their education and later life. The school council successfully helps children to show a good and developing awareness of how to become good citizens.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Satisfactory teaching underpins children's steady progress through the school. Threading through the work in classrooms are some significant strengths, which have a positive impact on the quality of children's learning. These include good and trusting relationships between staff and children, which support children's confidence in tackling new tasks. Classrooms are well organised with attractive wall displays and provide a stimulating working environment. Lessons are interesting; consequently, children are fully caught up in their work. Children with learning difficulties are supported well and make sound progress. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to work with these children. Teaching and learning are not better than satisfactory because there are weaknesses in two areas. Currently, teachers are not making full use of the detailed information that they have built up about individual children's attainment. They do not systematically evaluate whether children are making the progress that

they should in order to provide further support or challenge. The school is aware that teachers have not consistently challenged higher-attaining children in writing and mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and captures children's interest and imagination. A letter from 'The King of Storyland' to a Year 1 class, for example, was met by 'Wows' and sparkling eyes. It provided an exciting basis for their writing lesson. In the Foundation Stage there is a good range of activities planned, although more able children are not always sufficiently challenged and there are limited opportunities for children to write independently. Throughout the school there are good links made between subjects, with especially good planning for the development of writing skills. The use of information and communication technology is also planned well across the curriculum. Children with learning difficulties are supported well, although more able children do not always work on challenging enough activities in mathematics. There is a strong programme for the teaching of personal, social and health education. Work is enhanced by a range of visits and visitors. Special days for the arts and history help to bring learning alive. There is a good range of out-of-school clubs and both Years 4 and 6 benefit from the opportunity to take part in a residential trip.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school considers that the children are well cared for and supported, although the inspectors conclude that the provision overall is satisfactory. The good links with the adjoining nursery and local secondary school mean that children are well prepared for starting and moving on. They say they feel safe and are willing to go to any of the adults in school if they have a problem. Children have a good understanding of their targets in writing but less so in other subjects. The way work is marked helps them to achieve and the guidance at the start of lessons ensures they know what they are expected to do. Children with learning difficulties are supported well. The arrangements for ensuring health and safety are satisfactory, although not all risk assessments are fully documented. Child protection procedures are in place and the school recognizes that staff need regular guidance to ensure they know how to identify and deal with any concerns that may arise.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Aspects of the leadership of the headteacher are good. She has a determination to provide the best environment she can for the children and has successfully led the school through a period of significant change. She has developed a positive atmosphere in the school and made it a place the children enjoy attending. Teamwork is promoted and appreciated by the staff.

There are weaknesses in the way the school checks on the progress the children are making. The leadership team and the subject coordinators are not sufficiently aware of how every child is doing. Consequently, they do not know enough about where progress is good in the school and where it needs to improve. New systems are being developed that are beginning to address this. The way in which the leadership team check on the quality of the teaching in the school is satisfactory.

The school consults the children and parents and takes action where possible to respond to suggestions and ideas. The parents express strong support for the school. The governors fulfil their responsibilities and support the school well. Self-evaluation is generally accurate and there is a sound understanding of what needs to be done to improve achievement. Sometimes the pace of change is rather slow and a more direct management style would move things along more quickly. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	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	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3	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	3	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

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

Dear Children,

Can I start by saying a big 'thank you' to everyone for being so helpful to us when we visited your school recently.

These are the things we liked about your school

- You behave well and we like the way you are all proud of your school.
- You are kind to each other and many of you do jobs around school.
- The teachers plan interesting things for you to do.
- Most of you are doing well in literacy and numeracy lessons.
- Your art work is really good.

To make the school even better we think the teachers need to sometimes plan harder work for some of you. We also think the teachers need to check how you are doing in your work more often to make sure you are all doing as well as you can.

Good luck for the future in your new school building.

Yours sincerely

Andy McDowall HMI