



Whitmore Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100245
Local Authority Hackney
Inspection number 285754
Inspection dates 11–12 December 2006
Reporting inspector Cathie Munt HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bridport Place
School category	Community		London
Age range of pupils	3–11		N1 5JN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 7739 7973
Number on roll (school)	365	Fax number	020 7613 4682
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Rose Heatley
		Headteacher	Mr Andy Howe
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an HMI and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves a low socio-economic area. The majority of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. About fifteen percent are at the early stages of acquiring English and well over a half of the pupils speak another language at home. Turkish is the predominant mother tongue. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than average. The school has an Autistic Resource Base for ten pupils who receive specialised support but who are often integrated into mainstream classes. An exceptionally high proportion of pupils qualifies for free school meals. Pupils enter and leave in greater numbers than usual throughout the school year.

The current headteacher joined the school in September and is the fourth leader since the last inspection in 2003. There has also been a considerable number of changes in staffing over the last two years. Parts of the building and grounds are in a poor state of repair.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Whitmore Primary School provides a satisfactory level of education for its pupils. It is going through a period of rapid change. The new headteacher has galvanised staff and governors, resulting in a perceptible ethos of improvement. Under his effective guidance, staff and governors are contributing meaningfully to self-evaluation processes, leading to a shared and accurate view of strengths and areas requiring improvement. Recent changes within the management structure have had a significant impact on school improvement. However, the management of subjects varies from outstanding to developing, as several key subject leaders are new in post and have not had time to influence their areas of responsibility. The school is active in the community and enjoys effective partnerships with others, including a City Livery company, a law firm and local primary schools.

Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of both key stages were well below the national average in the 2006 national tests. The pupils' work was slightly better than this in about a third of lessons but was still too low in many classes. Some teachers' weak subject knowledge, ineffective monitoring of the pupils' progress and changes in staffing have all contributed to the low standards achieved. Currently, there are weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics and in the marking of work. Marking is inconsistent and does not give pupils sufficient information to help them to improve. However, where teaching is accomplished, pupils make good progress, showing that they are capable of achieving higher standards than in the past. As pupils arrive at the school with very low levels of attainment, particularly in language and social skills, the standards reached represent satisfactory achievement over time. Pupils in the Foundation Stage make good progress in developing communication and social skills.

Behaviour in the school has improved and, generally, is good. This is mainly due to clear expectations and consistency in the application of the school's behaviour policy. Good provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development plays an important role in developing the pupils' self esteem and promoting confidence. The curriculum is satisfactory in its content but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and computing skills in other subjects. Pupils enjoy and make good use of the extra curricular opportunities available to them.

There has been reasonable progress since the time of the last inspection but the rate of improvement has accelerated in the last term. To improve the management of information and increase the effectiveness of monitoring progress, the school has recently purchased software that will enable senior managers and governors to interrogate data with greater rigour and timeliness than in the past. Other noticeable improvements have included an increase in attendance rates bringing them in line with national figures, an appropriate level of high-quality monitoring of teaching and learning and recent improvements to the physical condition of the Reception class. The school's capacity to implement and sustain further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good so that pupils achieve higher standards in English, science and mathematics.
- Develop middle managers' skills so that they promote improvement effectively.
- Ensure that the senior managers and the governing body have regular access to accurate data to enable effective monitoring of progress to take place.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. It is better in English than in science or mathematics partly due to improvements in the teaching of reading. However, the progress that pupils make in their learning is hindered by inconsistencies in some of the teaching. Pupils did not meet the 2006 targets set by the school; data indicates that a greater proportion of the pupils are on line to meet their targets this year. There is very good additional support for vulnerable pupils. Consequently, those with learning and emotional difficulties, including those in the Autistic Resource Base, and those at the early stages of learning English make good progress in their learning. Pupils in the Foundation Stage make good progress in acquiring English and in their social skills but many are still below the standard expected when they reach Year 1.

Over the last few years there has been a steady rise in standards in line with the national trend, albeit from a very low starting point. However, the 2006 results were particularly poor at Key Stage 2 and standards in English, mathematics and science were well below average. The school attributes this to changes in staffing, weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge and the inadequate monitoring of progress. The work in classes shows that a small number of pupils in each year are working at broadly average levels for their age group. However, too many pupils are working at lower levels than they should be, particularly in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage settle quickly, developing positive attitudes to school. Pupils' spiritual moral social and cultural development is good and as a result they behave well and enjoy coming to school. Attendance has improved substantially this term and is satisfactory. Positively phrased school rules enable pupils to feel safe and to support each other well. There is a sense of enjoyment in the school. Pupils from many different cultural backgrounds get on very well together providing a good model for racial harmony. They show a good knowledge of many faiths, including Christianity, and the work on display celebrates their differences well. Pupils are becoming more actively involved in their education through discussion in lessons but there is room for the development of independent working.

Pupils understand how to stay safe and healthy and enjoy the fruit on offer at break. They demonstrate a good sense of community and are appropriately prepared as future

citizens through activities such as the school council. Their good progress in developing spoken English and in acquiring important social skills, their improved attendance and the responsible and caring attitudes that they show to their teachers and to each other equip them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with examples of good practice across the school. Relationships are pleasant and teachers generally present the pupils with good models of speaking and writing. However, there is not enough good teaching to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress. In a small number of less successful lessons, attention to detail was poor, teachers' subject knowledge was weak and pupils had insufficient opportunities to develop independent learning. In better taught lessons teachers had high expectations of what should be achieved, gave clear explanations, used summing up sessions to help pupils review how well they had done and made good use of learning support assistants.

The majority of pupils were attentive in lessons although a few, mainly boys, required frequent intervention from adults to stop them from interfering with the progress of other pupils. Assessment procedures are developing suitably due to the work of senior staff and to the support from the local authority consultant for English. However, marking is inconsistent. This allows errors to go unchallenged and gives pupils too little sense of how well they are doing. It results in inappropriate levels of challenge in some lessons when teachers do not have a clear enough idea of what pupils can do.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum, including that for the Foundation Stage, is satisfactory. It covers all requirements and is enhanced by a suitable range of clubs and activities including sports, music and drama. Pupils enjoy coming to school, feel successful and enjoy their achievements even though standards are low. Staff have endeavoured to make break, outside areas more interesting but some equipment is old and tired. Focus weeks promote events such as Black History and enjoyable residential trips benefit pupils' personal, social and emotional development. The school encourages healthy eating by providing fruit at break-times rather than sweets or biscuits. The whole curriculum is accessible to all pupils including those with learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders.

A weakness in the curriculum is the limited amount of cross-curricular links between subjects. The school recognises that many subjects are taught in isolation and that there is need for a more coherent approach.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care guidance and support are good. The school goes out of its way to know and understand its pupils well. Children in the Foundation Stage receive home visits prior to starting school in order to develop supportive links with parents. Pupils receive strong pastoral support from staff and enjoy good relationships with them. However, they need better feedback on how well their daily work is progressing. There is a good level of support for those who find school work or school life difficult to adjust to. The learning mentor is increasingly effective in helping individuals and groups to overcome problems and enjoy their lessons. Staff check that pupils are in a safe environment during lessons and at break-times. The breakfast club provides a calm and caring start to the school day and pupils and parents appreciate this greatly. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those in the Autistic Resource Base, and those for whom English is an additional language, are very well supported. The school has specialist teachers who give extra support and guidance to them as well as helping other teachers who work with them. Assistants work well with the teachers and give good support to vulnerable pupils. This helps them to make good progress over time. The school's procedures for child protection and health and safety are thorough.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has moved the school forward well in a very short time. He is a good role model with clear vision and a strong commitment to raising standards. This is reflected in the proficient, draft school improvement plan, produced in consultation with staff, governors, pupils and parents. The headteacher is supported well by the deputy head and senior leaders. Together they have made a good start in developing their roles and creating a team committed to raising expectations for all pupils. Key subject co-ordinators have been empowered to develop their subjects and there are now clear lines of management responsibility. Self evaluation is accurate and increasingly based on detailed tracking and data analysis. These initiatives, however, are recent, and are not yet clearly reflected in standards and pupils' achievements.

Teachers who are new to the school and those new to the profession are well supported. Whilst there are now more rigorous systems to monitor teaching and learning, the school is aware that inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching with too many lessons being only satisfactory.

The governors, led by a hardworking chairperson, are very aware of the importance of good leadership. They have been well informed about the performance of the school this term and are in a suitable position to influence its strategic direction. There is now good financial management.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We enjoyed our visit to Whitmore very much. Thank you for welcoming us and for the help that you gave us. Would you like to know what we thought about your school?

From talking with you and watching you in lessons it is clear that you enjoy school and are keen to improve your work. We are pleased that you all get on so well together and respect the views of others. You behave well not just in classrooms but also on the playground. Your behaviour in assemblies was especially good. Teachers and other adults do their best to make sure you are safe and are looked after well. We know they teach you about healthy eating and the importance of taking regular exercise. It is pleasing to see how many of you take part in school clubs and to hear how much you value the work done by the members of the school council. We were particularly pleased to hear that most of you now come to school regularly. Well done!

We agree with your headteacher, teachers and governors that the school is satisfactory and improving well and we have suggested some things that will help them to make sure that this continues. You are doing fairly well in English but we believe that you could do much better in mathematics and science. So we have asked your teachers to help you to improve further in all three subjects and to show you how to do better when they mark your books. We would like your teachers to get any training that they need to help them to improve the subjects that they lead. We have also suggested that the senior teachers and the governors regularly look at all the information that they have. This will help them to make sure that everything is going along as they have planned.

We agree with the targets the school has set. We know that you will work hard and do your very best to help your teachers to meet them.

Good luck for the future.

Catherine Munt HMI.