



Whitehall Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102399
Local Authority Hillingdon
Inspection number 286363
Inspection date 16 February 2007
Reporting inspector Graham Lee

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Cowley Road
School category	Community		Uxbridge
Age range of pupils	7-11		UB8 2LX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01895 234071
Number on roll (school)	322	Fax number	01895 812691
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs B Cassidy
		Headteacher	Mrs J Nightingale
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average junior school. It serves a mixed community with some elements of economic and social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than average. Around half the pupils are of White British heritage and the other half from an increasingly diverse range of backgrounds. About one in three speak English as an additional language but few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is higher than average. A small minority of pupils are from the local RAF base, which means that the proportion of pupils entering or leaving school mid-term is above average. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils flourish in an extremely caring and challenging learning environment. They are proud of the school and are bubbling with enthusiasm for all that it has to offer. They feel safe and secure, always strive to do their best and achieve exceptionally well. This is widely recognised by parents who hold the school in high regard. One commented, 'Both my children have thrived there in terms of academic achievement and social and personal development'.

From broadly average starting points pupils of all abilities make rapid progress and reach standards that are significantly above average by the time they leave. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are learning English are given very good support which ensures that they achieve as well as others. Good induction procedures enable those who arrive at different points in the year to 'hit the ground running' and to make rapid progress thereafter. Pupils' very good basic skills, together with positive attitudes to learning and ability to cooperate effectively ensure that they are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education and the world beyond.

There are a number of reasons why pupils do so well. Very good systems are in place to track pupils' progress which quickly identifies any who are in danger of underachieving and allows challenging targets for improvement to be set. The teaching is good and motivates pupils to achieve well. Occasionally, teachers talk for too long and do not challenge all pupils to contribute their ideas. As a result, the pace of these lessons slows there is not the same buzz of excitement as there is in most lessons. The outstanding curriculum develops pupils' basic skills very effectively and also provides an impressive range of enrichment activities, which give further opportunities for pupils to be creative and to enjoy their education. Pupils' personal development is also a high priority. For example, Year 5 pupils presented a very enjoyable and informative assembly on the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle.

This high quality of provision and exceptionally good achievement is the result of outstanding leadership and management over many years. A dynamic and able senior leadership team, committed and stable staff and knowledgeable governing body are providing excellent support to the new headteacher who has rapidly secured the confidence of the staff and has made a good start in building on the many existing strengths. The views of parents and pupils are listened to carefully and the impressive school council makes an important contribution to the life of the school. One member was clear that it is important 'that everybody has a voice in the school'. School leaders know the strengths and weaknesses very well and the school has improved from its last good inspection. However, they are not content to rest on their laurels. Consequently, the school is exceptionally well placed to go from strength to strength.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching challenges all pupils to make consistently good progress in all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils arrive at the school with standards that are broadly average or below in most years. By the end of Year 6 they reach standards in English, mathematics and science which are consistently well above average. This represents outstanding achievement for all groups of pupils. More able pupils do very well and the proportion reaching the higher level is much greater than it is nationally. The exceptionally good progress of pupils with learning difficulties is illustrated by the significant numbers who reach the expected levels for their age. The mobility of pupils has an impact on standards. Pupils who arrive at school at different points make rapid progress, often in a comparatively short space of time. However, the standards reached by pupils who have been at the school since Year 3 are even higher than the overall picture.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well being, including the social, moral, spiritual and cultural dimensions is outstanding. Pupils' enjoyment of their education is illustrated by their good attendance and enthusiasm for learning. They feel that 'teachers make learning fun by doing things in different ways', as one pupil put it. Pupils are polite and friendly and behave extremely well. They adopt safe practices around the school and feel safe because 'if you have a problem you can talk to staff and they will help'. Sport and nutrition have a high profile in the school, which contributes to pupils' exceptionally detailed understanding of their need to adopt healthy lifestyles. All pupils have the opportunity to contribute their views through class councils. The school council perform a range of duties around the school and point to improvements to the playground environment and pond area, which they have helped to influence. Other pupils enjoy their added responsibilities of 'refereeing' football on the adjacent infants' playground. They are also actively involved in their local community and raise money for a variety of charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and makes an important contribution to pupils' outstanding learning and achievement. There are examples of outstanding practice throughout the school and teaching is consistently strong in Year 6. Teachers plan well together to meet the needs of all learners. They enjoy a productive partnership with a highly skilled team of teaching assistants who make an important contribution to the quality of learning. Teachers have excellent relationships with their classes and high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. They use a variety of effective strategies, including interactive technology, to engage and motivate learners. Activities are chosen well to interest

learners, for example in Year 6 literacy lessons pupils were considering the location of a new leisure complex in a village. Convincing cases were developed on both sides of the argument. However, a few lessons are too dominated by the teacher and on these occasions pupils have too few opportunities to develop their own ideas. Consequently, some momentum is lost and pupils' progress slows. The marking of pupils' work is thorough and helps them to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very effective in promoting pupils' exceptionally good academic and personal development. Provision for basic skills is excellent and ensures that pupils of all abilities make rapid progress. Those who are in danger of underachieving are given effective support which enables them to achieve as well as their peers. The setting arrangements in Years 5 and 6 are particularly effective in giving additional support in small groups for those who find things more difficult, as well as providing considerable challenge for the more able. There are good links between different areas of the curriculum and ICT is used to support learning very well, a considerable advance from the last inspection. Visits and visitors, curriculum weeks and a wide range of well attended clubs also contribute very effectively to the development of new skills and interests. Sport has a particularly high profile with a record of considerable success over the years.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support of pupils are outstanding. The school tracks pupils' progress very carefully. This information is used to provide additional support where needed and to set challenging targets which contributes significantly to pupils' outstanding achievement. Pupils are clear that staff are 'kind and helpful and will go over things if you don't understand'. The school looks after its pupils extremely well. Vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those who arrive at various points in the year, are given very good support which enables them to settle quickly and to make rapid progress subsequently. The school works in close partnership with a range of agencies to support these pupils. The school enjoys the confidence of parents who feel that their children are safe and secure and make good progress. One commented, 'Despite the different needs of my three children the school has enabled them all to succeed academically as well as encouraging them to be polite and considerate individuals'.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

School leaders have been very successful in accomplishing their clear vision based on maintaining high standards within 'a caring and stimulating learning environment'. Monitoring of the school's performance is thorough and involves leaders at all levels.

When weaknesses are identified effective strategies are put in place bring about improvements, for example in relation to the quality of pupils' writing. A strength of the school is the stability of the staff team. Staff have many opportunities to develop their skills and many have been promoted to leadership positions within the school. Similarly, support staff are given responsibility and encouraged to develop their careers within the school. This stability and commitment contributes to the high quality provision for pupils. Governors are diligent and supportive and offer a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

I am writing to thank you all for making me so welcome when I visited the school before half term. I really enjoyed my day at Whitehall and you all helped by being so friendly and eager to talk to me about the school. I thought you would like to know what I found out.

You and your parents are right to be proud of your school because it is outstanding. I was really impressed with how enthusiastic you all were and how you were bursting to tell me about all the good things you do. You should be very proud of yourselves because you were all very polite and friendly and well behaved. I was particularly struck by the maturity of the school council. Well done all of you! You all feel safe because the staff look after you very well. I noticed that you all worked hard in lessons and tried to do your best. I really enjoyed the assembly and was impressed by your understanding of the need for lots of exercise and a good diet, not to mention your excellent sporting skills!

You do very well in school because lessons are interesting and you told me how teachers help you to improve your work. Those of you who have just arrived or who find things a bit more difficult are given lots of help. You really enjoy all the opportunities you have to take part in clubs and the evidence of your success in the trophy cupboard! By the time you move on to secondary school you reach standards which are well above average and are very well prepared.

One of the main reasons the school is doing so well is because the leadership is exceptionally good and all the staff work together as a team. They are determined to make things even better for you. I have asked them to share their ideas to make the teaching even better than it is now. I think that would help. Best of luck to you all.

Yours truly

Graham Lee

Lead Inspector