

The Weatheralls Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110769
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number	288765
Inspection date	17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Colin Henderson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	461
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joy Dean
Headteacher	Mr Trevor Parsons
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002
School address	Pratt Street Soham Ely Cambridgeshire CB7 5BH
Telephone number	01353720456
Fax number	01353720456

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector in one day.

Description of the school

Pupils come from a broad range of social backgrounds. They are largely of White British heritage, with a small number from a Traveller background. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language. There are fewer pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities than in most other schools of this size, although numbers are rising. When children start in the Nursery and Reception classes their attainment is similar to national expectations, although some have weaknesses in mathematics and reading. The school has recently achieved The Basic Skills Quality Award and The Active Mark.

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 that gives excellent value for money. It is valued highly by pupils and parents, as reflected in such positive comments as 'how lucky we are to have such a great school'. The school's success is built on the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher and other key staff. They value and encourage every pupil to achieve as well as he or she can. The strong team of staff and governors use the excellent self-evaluation procedures to know how well the school is doing and to quickly identify and improve weaknesses. This has resulted in outstanding improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has improved significantly, with many examples of outstanding practice and, as a result, standards of pupils' attainment have risen considerably.

Children get an excellent start to school in the Nursery and Reception classes. They benefit from very effective teaching and a well-organised and interesting range of activities. High quality teaching continues throughout Years 1 to 6. Teachers provide stimulating and enjoyable lessons. They use detailed assessment information to plan lessons carefully that challenge pupils of different abilities. As a result, pupils continue to make excellent progress in their learning and personal development. Their achievement is outstanding. Year 2 pupils attain above average standards and Year 6 pupils attain standards that are well above the national average.

Pupils' personal development and well being are outstanding. They clearly enjoy school - 'it is the school of smiles!' Their attendance is good and they have enthusiastic attitudes in lessons. Their behaviour is exemplary in class and around the school. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the excellent range of learning activities including the large number of extra-curricular activities. Their participation in a wide range of sports helps pupils to have a detailed understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles. Staff give high priority to pupils' personal development. Relationships are outstanding throughout the school, as reflected by older pupils looking after the younger ones carefully. Pupils enjoy taking increasing responsibility for their own learning and for contributing to the school community. They are excited by their involvement in the 'Weatheralls Wings' initiative in which they set their own personal targets and work hard to achieve them. The influential school council enables pupils' views to contribute to improving the school, for example, by introducing 'golden tables' to reward pupils whose behaviour is impeccable at lunchtimes.

Teachers know their pupils very well and provide outstanding support and guidance for their personal and academic development. Pupils are confident about approaching any adult if they have a concern. Teachers check regularly on how well each pupil is doing and use this information to guide their teaching and provide further support where needed. Pupils assess their own work and that of a partner. This, together with helpful individual guidance from their teacher and consistent use of improvement targets, helps them to raise the standard of their work.

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. His influential and positive style encourages and enables all staff to contribute very well to improving the school. In a very effective partnership with his assistant heads, other key staff and an influential governing body, he closely evaluates teaching and how it supports pupils' learning. They analyse detailed tracking data carefully to set challenging targets, pick out areas of weakness and establish effective procedures to improve them. For example, test data showed standards in mathematics to be lower than in other core subjects. This led to a rigorous focus on teaching and learning in

mathematics resulting in a significant improvement. There is scope for some pupils to do better in organising their writing and solving number problems. The school is rightly planning to improve these skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable all pupils to acquire and use the key skills needed to organise their writing and solve number problems.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding throughout the school. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make outstanding progress. Most exceed the nationally expected learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. This excellent progress continues throughout the school as a result of consistently high quality teaching, pupils' enthusiastic attitudes to learning and their very effective involvement in assessing their work and improving any weaknesses. Standards of attainment have risen considerably over the last few years. Detailed and accurate tracking data, together with the results of national tests, show that Year 2 pupils attain above average standards, especially in reading. Year 6 pupils attain standards that are well above average, with a high proportion of more-able pupils attaining the higher level 5, particularly in English and science. The excellent provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities helps them to achieve very well. The very small number of pupils from a Traveller background are supported very well and make excellent progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in their excellent attitudes to learning, exemplary behaviour and regular participation in clubs and school outings. Pupils trust staff and are confident to share any concerns they may have. Attendance is good as a result of the headteacher taking effective measures to limit term-time holidays. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy helping others. They take increasing responsibility for their work, for example, by helping to assess their own and others' work. This helps them prepare extremely well for their future lives. They benefit from regular exercise in an excellent range of physical activities and enjoy the healthy range of food cooked by the school kitchen. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and clearly reflects the school's caring ethos.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The outstanding teaching in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 6 helps pupils to enjoy learning and make excellent progress. Nursery and Reception children benefit from an environment that has greatly improved since the last inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants make imaginative use of it to create stimulating and well organised learning activities. Teachers manage their classes very well indeed. They use interactive whiteboards successfully to capture pupils' interest. Assessments are used very well to plan lessons and evaluate teaching. The partnership between teachers and teaching assistants is very effective in providing individual support. For these reasons, teachers are able to meet the different needs of pupils very well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The range of learning activities for children in the Foundation Stage and for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is outstanding. They are planned very well to build successfully on earlier learning, link subjects together and meet different learning needs, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. There are excellent opportunities for pupils to participate in music and sports and to learn a modern foreign language. Each year a curriculum focus week designed around healthy lifestyles enhances pupils' enthusiasm and knowledge. Very good links with the local village college improve learning opportunities, for example, in science. There is an impressive range of after-school clubs, adding greatly to pupils' learning and enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff know pupils very well and work hard to provide an outstanding level of care, guidance and support. This is valued highly by pupils and their parents - 'staff treat the children as if they were their own'. Pupils' personal development is carefully supported and monitored. This makes them feel safe and valued and they report that there are very few incidents of bullying or harassment. All legal requirements for safeguarding pupils' welfare are met.

Pupils' academic progress is assessed regularly and accurately. They have a good understanding of their levels of work. They are encouraged to improve their own knowledge and understanding of what needs improving, for example, through excellent teacher guidance and group improvement targets. As a result, any problems are picked up quickly and this helps pupils to do as well as they can.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has a clear vision of how he wants the school to improve. He has shared this effectively with his staff and governors to provide a unity of purpose and has implemented it successfully through detailed improvement planning. Governors provide excellent support to the school and exercise effective oversight. Outstanding self-evaluation procedures provide a clear understanding of what is going well and what needs further improvement. By distributing leadership and management responsibilities across a broad range of staff, the headteacher has enabled all staff to tackle weaknesses rigorously and contribute effectively to improving the school. A close scrutiny of teaching, supported by excellent opportunities for staff to extend their professional skills, ensures that it is of a consistently high quality. A strong focus on encouraging greater parental involvement, for example, by visiting lessons, enables them to support their children's learning. Given the outstanding influence of the headteacher, the very strong team approach, excellent parental support and the outstanding improvement since the last inspection, the school is ideally placed to improve further.

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Annex A

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 quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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	1
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?	1
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.

Annex A

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	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

18 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of The Weatheralls Primary School, Pratt Street, Soham, Cambridgeshire, CB7 5BH

Thank you for being so friendly and making me feel welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I think that you go to an excellent school. The things I liked most about your school were:

- All the adults care about you as individuals, make sure that you are safe and you always have someone to turn to if you are worried.
- The work of your school council is very good.
- You all get on very well together.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you clearly enjoy school; this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn.
- Teachers make your lessons interesting and all the adults put a lot of effort into helping you do well; you enjoy your work and try hard to do what your teachers ask.
- You have a very good understanding of how to improve your work and are working hard to achieve your 'Weatheralls Wings'.
- The school puts on many interesting activities, clubs and trips; I know you enjoy these very much.
- Mr Parsons, the staff and governors are working hard to make your school even better.

I agree with Mr Parsons and his staff that some of you could do even better in organising your writing and solving number problems. It is pleasing that work has already started to help you do this.

We hope that you continue to be happy at school and carry on working hard.

Colin Henderson

Additional Inspector