

# Whitley Village School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110997
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	288822
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 June 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sarah Drake

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	84
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Julia Cooper
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Morrison
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 January 2002
<b>School address</b>	Village Lane Whitley Cheshire WA4 4QH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 730230
<b>Fax number</b>	01925 730230

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This small school serves the villages of Whitley and Dutton and a wider, socially advantaged, area between Northwich and Warrington. Very few pupils are eligible to receive a free school meal, have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or belong to minority ethnic groups. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2005 and the assistant headteacher took up post in September 2006. The school's Investors in People status was renewed in 2006.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This thriving village school offers its pupils a good quality all round education and provides them with a solid foundation on which to build their future lives. Parents are very supportive and comments such as, 'We feel that the strong relationship between the school, parents and the community enhances the overall education and development of pupils.' The recently formed Friends of Whitley is galvanising parents' enthusiasm into action, for example helping to set up the new library. Parents are also involved, with other members of the community, in digging over the ground to create a vegetable garden. Partnership with other schools also strengthens the provision. It helps to ensure that pupils achieve well and consistently reach above average standards or higher in English, mathematics and science as well as performing strongly in other areas such as sports.

Pupils' personal development is excellent. Very good relationships abound, with older pupils providing very good role models for others in terms of responsibility and care. Pupils understand that acting safely, for example in their exciting adventure playground, adds to everyone's enjoyment. They eat healthily and take plenty of exercise - around 30% took part in the recent village fun run. The strong emphasis placed on developing pupils' problem-solving skills together with collaborative working prepares them very well for the next stage of their education. The good quality curriculum supports their learning well in all areas, with increasingly strong links being made between subjects.

Good quality teaching, care, guidance and support underpin the good progress that pupils make. Teachers know them very well as individuals and adjust their support accordingly so that pupils grow in confidence. However, the recording and monitoring of pupils' progress is at an early stage of development and teachers do not yet make best use of the information this yields when planning and teaching lessons. They mark work regularly but provide few guiding comments pinpointing what pupils need to do next in order to move their learning forward.

Leadership and management are of good quality, firmly focussed on helping pupils achieve their full potential. Since her arrival the headteacher has accurately evaluated the school's strengths and the areas that need development. The new systems are becoming established and, as one staff member commented, 'people are beginning to see the benefits'. The smallness of the school means that all staff perform many roles, but subject leaders are not yet taking enough responsibility for pupils' achievement in their areas. Governors are well informed and provide constructive challenge to the school as well as good quality support. The school is expensive to run and provides satisfactory value for money. It is well positioned to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Use the information gained from monitoring pupils' progress when planning and teaching lessons.
- Provide clear guidance for pupils to help them understand how to improve their work.
- Ensure subject leaders take responsibility for pupils' achievement in their areas.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

In this small school children's skills when they enter the Foundation Stage vary considerably from year to year, but they are usually at the levels expected for their age or higher. They make good progress in their Reception year so that the majority join Year 1 working at levels above those expected for their age. They show good levels of confidence and can communicate well. Pupils continue to achieve well throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. In 2006 the school's overall results at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were exceptionally high. Pupils of all abilities make good progress. In an English lesson, pupils in Years 5 and 6 demonstrated high level skills that in a short time allowed them to read a poem, 'Evacuee'. They identified the techniques used by the author to create an atmosphere, got to the heart of what the poem is about and, in small groups, acted out a scene that brought it to life. It is unsurprising that parents make such comments as, 'I am very happy and pleased with the progress my child has made in school.'

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

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that the school operates as a happy, harmonious community. Pupils' enjoyment of school is demonstrated by their generally excellent behaviour and above average attendance. They are keen to participate in all it has to offer and to ensure that everyone's opinion is taken into account. From Year 1 upwards they have the confidence to lead assemblies and to act as buddies for anyone feeling left out. In Reception they share equipment well and offer help to each other, for example when using sticky tape and plastic containers to make musical instruments. Pupils' fundraising has recently led to the sponsorship of seven pupils in a South African school with whom the school has developing email links. Similar communications with a French school, and learning the language from Reception upwards, are helping to deepen pupils' understanding of other cultures, such as Christmas traditions. A strong community spirit pervades the school where, for example, pupils have created symbolic paintings in the style of Australian aborigines to portray distinctive features of the village such as the pub and the pond. Pupils leave the school very well prepared to contribute to and benefit from the next community in which they find themselves.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers prepare lessons well, including extension activities for those who complete tasks quickly. This, combined with their clear explanations of the lessons' purpose, leads to pupils settling to work with a will. Very good relationships and positive behaviour management ensure that pupils collaborate and sustain their concentration well. Teachers take care to ensure that pupils understand what they are expected to do and are reasonably quick to notice if they show confusion when working independently. However, on occasion they allow pupils to ask too many questions rather than encouraging them to use their initiative, and when this happens the pace of the lesson flags. By contrast, where pupils are engaged in practical activities, for example Year 1 and 2 designing experiments to demonstrate the accuracy of their predictions about sound, the classroom buzzes with activity.

In the Foundation Stage staff do not record frequently enough their observations of what pupils can do. Throughout the school while teachers plan their lessons carefully, when doing so they do not make enough use of information about pupils' progress in recent lessons or over time. This means that teachers do not always make maximum use of the opportunities to challenge pupils' thinking, for example through their questioning. Similarly, when marking pupils' work, they do not provide enough guidance on how pupils could improve it.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is well designed to cater for the needs of pupils who are all taught in classes with others belonging to different age groups. The emphasis placed on developing their literacy and numeracy skills is enriched by visitors such as theatre groups and members of support services. Residential visits for pupils from Year 1 upwards make a strong contribution to their developing confidence. Throughout the day staff give consistent messages to support pupils' personal development so that even the youngest are quite clear that, for instance, 'You can hug someone to help them feel better, but only if they want it.' Pupils greatly enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities that is unusually wide for a small school. Small group work for those who find learning more difficult than others ensures they make similarly good progress to their peers. Good links with the neighbouring high school and other primaries strengthen the provision for sport, music, mathematics, design and technology, drama and for those identified as gifted and talented.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' description of this as a, 'comfy school' clearly demonstrates that they feel well looked after and confident to share any concerns with staff. They know that staff will offer help but they also know how to stand up for themselves, for example, by saying 'Stop it' three times if someone is teasing them, before seeking further support. Procedures are in place to ensure child protection, health and safety. Excellent arrangements, much praised by parents, help newcomers settle swiftly into school. During the inspection those preparing to join the Reception class in September contentedly joined in morning lessons and break-time, very well looked after by older pupils. The provision for those who have learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties supports them well. Older pupils talk with real pleasure about the introduction of targets for improvement of their work explaining that, 'they are really helpful because you know what you're aiming for'. However, this is a recent innovation for the school and such provision is not yet firmly embedded into practice.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Strong leadership has led to pupils achieving above average test results over a number of years. The analytical and determined leadership and management now in place are helping to ensure that the school's systems and practice enable it to maintain these standards. Development planning now extends beyond one year, an improvement since the previous inspection, but is still more focussed on actions than the desired impact on pupils' achievement. However, staff and governors are fully aware of the priorities for improvement and recent actions, such as involvement with other schools to raise standards in writing through the use of drama, are

having a positive outcome. The introduction of a robust system for monitoring pupils' progress is already highlighting and leading to extra provision for those needing support. As yet, the role of subject leaders in monitoring provision and the outcomes for pupils in their areas of responsibility is underdeveloped. Both the leadership and staff members have encountered difficulties during the period of change but they are now working together well in their commitment to the pupils' best interests. Members of the governing body have a wealth of experience and expertise that helps them fulfil their role with acumen and diplomacy. Finances are very tight but the school is well aware that the generous staffing levels of the current year cannot be sustained. The decision to use up the reserves over recent months has allowed a useful breathing space in which to establish a firm footing on which to base the school's future improvement.

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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	<b>School Overall</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>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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	2
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	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**

Inspection of Whitley Village Primary School, Whitley, WA4 4QH

Your friendliness and willingness to chat really helped me to enjoy the day I recently spent at Whitley Village. Thank you for your warm welcome and for helping me to understand why you enjoy your school so much. This letter is to explain to you what I found out on my visit. The main message is that, as you yourselves told me, yours is a good school. One of the reasons for this is that it helps you reach above average standards year after year.

You get along with each other extremely well and are very willing to offer help. You have a very good idea of how to stay fit and healthy and you make excellent use of your super adventure playground. You are keen to get involved in everything on offer and are very lucky to have such a wide range of extra activities to choose from. It is good that even the pupils in Years 1 and 2 feel brave enough to go on residential visits. You behave very well and pay good attention in lessons so that you understand what your teachers expect you to do. They prepare lessons carefully and explain things clearly to you, but I have asked them to make better use of the information they have about your progress to make sure that they provide you all with sufficient challenge. I have also asked them to help you understand more clearly how to improve your work - I know that some of you are already finding your new target cards really useful.

Your headteacher has a very good idea of how the school can be improved and is helping the other staff to put systems into place to make sure that it does get even better. The governors are also providing good quality leadership. It is now important that subject leaders take more responsibility for how much progress you are making in their subjects. This is difficult for them in a small school because they all have lots of jobs to do, but I'm sure they'll manage to do it. Your job will be to continue to make the most of all the good things that Whitley Village has to offer you.