



Whaley Bridge Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112647
Local Authority DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number 289361
Inspection dates 28–29 September 2006
Reporting inspector George Derby

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Buxton Road
School category	Community		Whaley Bridge, Whaley Bridge
Age range of pupils	4–11		High Peak, Derbyshire SK23 7HX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01663 732354
Number on roll (school)	255	Fax number	01663 735014
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Anne Winter
		Headteacher	Mr Richard Heys
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Whaley Bridge School is a slightly larger than average primary school which caters mainly for pupils from the local area. A well above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or have a statement of special educational need. This is because the school has an enhanced resource base for a large number of pupils exhibiting complex learning difficulties and disabilities. These include moderate and severe learning difficulties, autism and emotional, social and behaviour difficulties. The proportion of pupils eligible to free school meals, from minority ethnic backgrounds or learning English as an additional language is very low. Children enter the school in Reception with a wide range of ability. Attainment on entry varies from year to year because some pupils enter at times other than the usual, including pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Overall it is broadly average. The school undertakes a very large number of initiatives and has many awards for its work. These include Basic Skills Award, Positive Play Award, Multisport, Investors in People, and the Anti-Bullying Kitemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and very inclusive school. It does a particularly good job in ensuring that pupils with the most complex learning difficulties and disabilities take part in as many activities as possible. The good, vibrant, diverse curriculum contributes to pupils' achievement and to their great enjoyment of learning. The exciting array of enrichment activities brings an added dimension to pupils' social development, and helps them to follow a healthy lifestyle. Overall their personal development is outstanding. Arrangements for pupils' care are good. Pupils know they will get good support and help when they need it and consequently, they try hard in lessons and behave excellently. One autistic pupil said, 'staff are always there to help me'. The school is led well by a very experienced and effective headteacher. He has assembled a good senior team who know the school well and lead their subjects and areas effectively. Their monitoring of the school's performance and progress in its priorities is effective. Important evaluations of their work are thoroughly discussed and acted upon, although not always fully recorded as useful evidence of the success of their work. Governors are a little too accepting at times of what the school says and do not have fully developed ways in which to challenge it. Staff throughout the school share the headteacher's infectious enthusiasm to do better and this is a key reason for the school's success. The good teaching, clear focus on improving pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding ensure that pupils achieve well across the school. As one parent states, 'the positive attitude, commitment and experience of staff, together with their caring and understanding, creates a marvellous atmosphere in which children learn and develop personally'. She is right! Good provision is made for children in their Reception Year. They are carefully assessed and make good progress. This good progress continues throughout the school because the match of work with just the right level of challenge is clearly evident. Pupils who are not doing as well as expected are identified and supported effectively. Overall the pupils who have learning difficulties achieve well. They do extremely well in their personal development, especially in their readiness for learning and improvement in their behaviour. These pupils participate in lessons and activities with impressive concentration and interest when compared with their starting points and information from previous records. Standards in Year 2 and 6 vary from year to year because of fluctuating intakes and pupils joining mid-year but overall are about average. The headteacher takes very seriously the implementation of initiatives to support the pupils' personal and academic development. This is why the school has received so many awards for its work. The school's track record of improvement is good and it has good potential to improve further. The information gained from the school's tracking of pupils' progress is used well to resolve issues which arise from it, such as improving speaking and listening and boys' writing. However, the data is not organised in such a way as to make it efficient for the school to retrieve information. This is especially important given the high proportion of pupils in Key Stage 2 joining mid-year, and the large numbers of pupils admitted into each class who are working at a level well below National Curriculum Level 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the organisation and ease of retrieval of the school's information on pupils' progress. - Ensure that whole school self-reviews and checks on their practice by staff are formally recorded and include the effective contributions of governors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and make good progress. This is because of good teaching, effective planning and the good knowledge that staff have of their pupils. The pupils with learning difficulties make good progress because the school engages them successfully in their work, which is planned in very small steps to aid their success and self-esteem. The overall picture of standards from the 2005 national tests and assessments was one of average attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics and in Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. However, the data include the results of the pupils with considerable learning difficulties and do not tell the full story. The school's own information shows that pupils do better than the national assessment data suggest, although boys did underachieve in writing. This is something which the school has addressed adequately in its plan for improvement. In the 2006 tests and assessments the results at Key Stage 1 and 2 were slightly lower than national figures. However, the school's data show a more positive picture when account is taken of the large number of pupils with significant learning difficulties who remain below Level 1. The work seen in lessons indicates that standards for the current Year 2 and 6 are on track to be average. The school carefully adjusts its academic targets it sets for pupils to take account of the changes in attainment each year. Overall, in 2006 the school exceeded its challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are highly appreciative of what the school has to offer them. Pupils acquire a highly developed sensitivity for others, listen carefully to each other, and respect different points of view. Their contribution to the community is excellent. They show a strong social and moral sense, and behaviour is excellent. All groups of pupils are empowered to become involved fully in school life. Their spiritual and cultural development is enriched by their thoughtfulness for each other, and also through the arts. Art, in particular, enhances significantly the quality of pupils' work, and therefore their sense of achievement and self-esteem. Pupils want to come to school, their attendance is good, they feel safe, and their attitudes to work are most positive. Pupils understand well the need to develop healthy lifestyles, talking perceptively about the importance of healthy eating and exercise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan well for pupils' learning and make it clear what they are to achieve by the end of a lesson. They provide challenging work and expect a great deal of their pupils. Pupils rise to this challenge and try really hard. On occasion the pace of lessons is slow and activities insufficiently motivate a few pupils. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used soundly to support learning. However, the use of interactive whiteboards as an interactive tool and the use of ICT for recording, especially to aid the independence of a few pupils with learning difficulties, are under-developed. The success of the school's approach to inclusion is due to the good quality of the staff's planning for pupils' needs, continuous liaison between the special educational needs co-ordinator and class teachers and the effective support by teaching assistants. Assessment is good across the school, especially in Reception. In the enhanced resource base, the small steps of progress are recorded accurately. The gains of some pupils, especially relating to their personal skills, are impressive. However, for a few pupils who make only very small steps, the recording is not refined enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is successful in meeting the diverse needs of pupils. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed well and applied well in other subjects. The good Foundation Stage curriculum is packed full of learning activities which captivate the children's imagination and leave them wanting more. Good strategies are in place to ensure that pupils with learning needs benefit from high levels of support and enable them to be included in much that the school has to offer. However, on occasions, the planning of work means that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have little to do in the way of recording which is not always best geared to developing their full independence as learners. The school provides an outstanding range of enrichment activities through after-school clubs, visits and visitors to the school. Through these pupils gain a strong awareness of issues relating to the environment and cultural and global diversity. Furthermore, they learn a foreign language, develop their musical talents and appreciate the importance of keeping fit, safe and healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school rightly has a very good reputation for supporting its pupils and ensuring their well-being. This is particularly evident for the pupils with learning difficulties which results in them taking an active part in lessons in the main school. Pupils thrive at the school, enjoy their learning, and feel safe and secure. Arrangements for safeguarding them are good. Pupils make a very good contribution to school life because of the very positive working relationships with adults they know they can

trust. The academic guidance they receive is good overall, but occasionally they are not sure about what to do in the longer term to improve. The school is developing further its pupil target- setting in order to rectify this. Its systems for tracking individual pupils' progress are strong. However, the analysis and evaluation of all its data are occasionally hindered because of the way the data are organised.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

An excellent feature is the way in which the school's leaders ensure equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils. The school's evaluation of its performance is accurate and it has a very clear sense of what it needs to do. Staff are most purposeful in their determination to secure continued improvement, and to raise standards. Governors are developing good links with the school, and visit it regularly. However, their monitoring of school policies and its work, are not sufficiently developed. Some aspects of the school's arrangements for analysing its work are informal. The school's evaluations are thoroughly discussed and practice adapted accordingly. However, these are not always fully recorded which makes it difficult for the school to look back and justify fully how well it is improving.

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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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2

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?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

2 October 2006 Dear Pupils Whaley Bridge Primary School, Buxton Road, Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire, SK23 7HX. I write to give a big thank you to all who spoke with us during our visit, especially the school council. We enjoyed our time in your school and you told us you enjoy it as well! The staff are certainly proud of your achievements and efforts and we think they are right to be so. The excellent displays on the walls told us a lot about your work and your life in the school and community. We will always remember your Friday assembly and the 'magic' performed by Mr Heys. Your singing is outstanding and I know you are very proud of your choir. We think you go to a good school. We were particularly impressed with how you all get on with one another, especially your excellent behaviour. Your school is extremely successful in the way it makes sure that, no matter what your difficulties, you are all included in lessons and in the life of the school. The school really helps you to grow as individuals and moulds you into citizens who have a good understanding of the world around you and how you can help others. This is just like the plant Mr Heys 'magicked' into growing during assembly. You do well in your lessons and your learning. The teachers put a lot of effort into their planning, make lessons interesting and do their best for you. We think the teaching is good and the staff are careful to ensure they know how well you are learning. If you need help you get it! There were just two things we thought the school could do to make itself even better: - to make even more use of the information it has about your learning and progress; and - to ensure that when staff and governors check on the work of the school they adequately record what they think about it and intend to do. Best wishes George Derby (Lead inspector), Michael Miller and Martin Newell