



Whitehill Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114392
Local Authority East Sussex
Inspection number 289895
Inspection dates 28 February –1 March 2007
Reporting inspector Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Luxford Road
School category	Community		Crowborough
Age range of pupils	4–7		TN6 2HW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01892 655846
Number on roll (school)	174	Fax number	01892 654928
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mervyn Hatherway
		Headteacher	Tracy Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001		

Age group 4–7	Inspection dates 28 February –1 March 2007	Inspection number 289895
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-size infant school serves the local area in Crowborough and also the surrounding villages. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is below average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the Reception Year is broadly at the level expected, although there is a broad range. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average but the proportion with statements of special educational needs (higher forms of need) is above average. The number of pupils attending the school is lower than when it was last inspected, mainly because the number of children in the area has fallen. The current headteacher took up post two years ago.

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 school where children achieve well. Excellent leadership by the headteacher in close teamwork with all staff ensures pupils can successfully develop their academic, practical, creative and sporting talents. Parents are delighted with the way their children flourish in the school. As one parent said, 'My children have thrived in a warm, enthusiastic and nurturing environment.' Children make good progress from the start of the Reception Year to the end of Year 2 to reach significantly above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Much emphasis has recently been given to improving the quality of teaching and learning and, as a result, teaching is good. In Reception, it is sometimes outstanding. Children's progress in Reception is excellent in speaking, thinking, reading and personal development.

Interesting and lively lessons conducted in a warm and caring atmosphere promote pupils' happiness and enjoyment of school. Pupils' personal development, well-being and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Pupils respond to the high expectations and behave well in and out of school, growing in confidence as they progress through the school. They are very aware of how to stay safe and understand the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. Lessons are usually carefully planned to make sure all pupils learn well but, in Years 1 and 2, writing lessons do not always focus enough on teaching basics such as spelling, handwriting and punctuation. Nevertheless, good development of pupils' literacy, numeracy, decision-making and problem solving skills prepares them well for the next stages of their education and their future lives.

The curriculum is good. It is varied and relevant to pupils' interests. It enables them to develop an excellent understanding of the need to care for their environment and they make an outstanding contribution to this in their efforts as 'Eco Warriors'. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils, especially the more capable, to practise writing at length in different subjects. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Pastoral care is outstanding whilst academic guidance is good. The school's links with parents are excellent and play a considerable part in promoting pupils' well-being and good achievement.

Leadership and management are good. Senior staff keep a close check on the school's performance and, as a result, they have a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development. However, the part played by some middle managers in securing improvement is not as effective as it might be because monitoring of teaching in their subjects lacks rigour. The school is fully aware of this and that more capable pupils make better progress in reading and mathematics than writing. It is already focusing on improving these areas. Progress since the last inspection is good and the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress in writing in Years 1 and 2 by rigorously teaching basics and increasing opportunities for writing at length in different subjects.

- Develop the roles of middle managers so they thoroughly check teaching and learning and have a full impact on raising pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are significantly above average by the end of Year 2. In Reception, children make good progress and their progress is excellent in speaking, thinking and reading. Children get off to such a strong start because of effective action taken by the school to develop the provision made for them. By the time they begin Year 1, they have at least reached and often exceeded the standards expected.

Pupils' good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. They do particularly well in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing is steady but is not as consistent as in reading and mathematics. Good gains are made in expressing ideas and writing fluently. However, spelling, handwriting and punctuation skills do not develop as effectively. The use of too many worksheets restricts pupils' ability to write at length in other subjects. Standards in Year 2 national assessments improved significantly in 2006 compared with those reached in 2005 due to more rigorous monitoring of teaching and assessment and the setting of more challenging targets. More capable pupils did particularly well in reading and mathematics, although their achievement was only satisfactory in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because they are given good support to help them to achieve their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is excellent and an important factor in their good achievement. Pupils' great enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance and punctuality. The very good relationships pupils have with each other and with the adults in school help them to develop good self-esteem. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community through raising funds for charities and their work as 'Eco Warriors', for example, when they recycle waste products. Pupils have a very good understanding for their age of global issues and the meaning of Fair Trade. All pupils contribute to the running of the school through the School Council and are pleased their suggestions are acted upon. They are aware of the responsibilities of citizenship. As one council member said, 'We try to make the school better for everyone.'

Pupils are very aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and take good advantage of healthy eating, exercise and fresh air opportunities. Pupils have a strong understanding of safety issues and say they feel safe at school. Almost all pupils behave well. The curriculum enables pupils to develop excellent problem-solving and decision-making skills. These skills, together with their competence in literacy and numeracy, prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and some for the youngest children is outstanding. In Reception, teachers provide a very good balance for pupils to learn through investigation and problem solving and in response to direct teaching of skills.

Throughout the school, teachers have very good relationships with pupils and high expectations of their behaviour which create a positive climate for learning. Teachers plan well and provide interesting work. They successfully teach thinking skills, particularly those associated with creativity, evaluation and planning. Careful grouping arrangements usually ensure work is well matched to the wide ability range in each class. However, in some classes in Years 1 to 2 there is not enough direct teaching of basic writing skills and this restricts the consistency of pupils' progress.

Teachers use interactive whiteboard technology very competently to motivate and engage pupils but computers are not always used as a regular part of day-to-day teaching and learning. Teaching assistants are well trained and their time is well managed so they provide good support for pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a broad range of interesting activities. It enables pupils to develop their academic, creative, practical and sporting talents well, so that they become well-rounded learners. Careful account is taken of the age range in classes, so ensuring that pupils in mixed age classes do not miss out.

Provision for children in Reception is good and excellent in communication, literacy and personal development. Children have very good opportunities to take responsibility for some of their own learning and for learning through both talk and practical activity. There is also a good balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities.

In Years 1 and 2, provision for literacy and numeracy is good overall, with a strong emphasis on the development of communication skills. However, in these year groups there is not enough planning for pupils to write at length in different subjects. This is a factor limiting the progress of more capable pupils in particular. The well organised provision for pupils with learning difficulties enables these pupils to achieve well and often reach national standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care for pupils is outstanding. The school takes this area very seriously and a great deal of effort goes into ensuring all pupils feel secure, safe and happy. Procedures for ensuring pupils' safety are very good and meet all requirements. The school's excellent partnerships with parents strongly promote pupils' well-being and

achievement. High quality systems for working with parents enable them to be effective partners in their children's education.

Close links with nurseries and other pre-school providers ease the transfer to Reception. Strong links with outside agencies help staff to provide very good support for vulnerable pupils. Academic assessment is good overall and has been much improved in the last two years. Pupils are clear about their English and behaviour targets but not always certain about their mathematics targets. Teachers' marking does not always show pupils clearly what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides an excellent educational direction for the school. Her promotion of strong staff teamwork and systems for involving parents in their children's learning has created a secure framework for school improvement. Parents are delighted with the changes being made. In particular, they value the headteacher's close engagement with them and the strong communication channels. Other significant improvements have been made to the curriculum and systems for checking teaching and monitoring pupils' progress. These developments are already enhancing children's achievement in Reception.

The effective senior leadership team is focused on raising standards and ensuring the excellent personal development of learners. Staff are encouraged and expected to share good practice and learn from each another. School improvement planning is clear and provides good opportunities for staff to evaluate the impact of initiatives on raising standards. The headteacher has successfully sought to give staff the opportunity to monitor and manage their areas of responsibility. However, the school realises there is a way to go before all subject leaders have a secure overview of the whole school picture and are fully effective in monitoring the quality of teaching in their subjects.

Governors are well organised, take an active part in the life of the school and keep a watchful eye on how well pupils are doing. However, several new governors are still developing their skills in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

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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?	1
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	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

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	2
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	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	2
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

As you know, we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed seeing you at work and play and talking with some of you. Thank you for being so welcoming.

The school gives you a good education and really helps you learn. These are some of the good things we found out about your school.

- You make good progress and reach good standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- You really enjoy school and get on very well with each other.
- You behave well and are kind to others.
- You keep the school very tidy and are very good Eco-Warriors.
- Your lessons are interesting and help you to learn about lots of things.
- Teachers make sure you are very well cared for and kept safe.
- Your headteacher and all the other teachers are working hard to make the school even better.

Here are a few things we have asked the school to do:

- give you more chances to practise your writing
- show you how to improve your spelling, handwriting and punctuation
- help teachers in charge of subjects to be more involved in checking how well you are learning.

You can help your teachers by working hard to improve your writing, including spelling.

Thank you again for your help and for being so friendly.