

Whitstable Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118364
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	291109
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Hartland HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	321
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Bates
Headteacher	Gill Moody
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001
School address	Oxford Street Whitstable CT5 1DB
Telephone number	01227 272385
Fax number	01227 772075

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is bigger than the average primary school. Most pupils are White British and there are few pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language. A lower-than-average number of pupils receive free school meals. There is a well-above-average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Whitstable Junior School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. After a period of low standards and underachievement, the pupils are now making satisfactory progress. Standards remain below average but are rising. This is as a result of the recent but highly determined and sustained efforts of school leaders, and increasingly of all the staff, to bring about very necessary improvements. The school's well-chosen actions, based on accurate self-evaluation, are having a beneficial impact, not only on pupils' achievement but also on the climate and atmosphere in the school. Whitstable Junior is an improving school.

The pupils' personal development is good. The curriculum and the care, guidance and support provided by the school are good. Although the behaviour of a small minority of pupils had caused concerns, improved systems of support mean that behaviour is now good. Most parents are very positive about what the school provides for their children. As one parent put it, 'Staff are committed and it is a happy school.' Parents also say that the school now provides them with good information about their children's progress.

Teaching is satisfactory and getting better. However, not all teachers have consistently high expectations and challenge all pupils, especially the most able, to achieve highly. Marking is regular but does not provide all pupils with enough guidance on what they need to do to improve. The checks on pupils' progress focus primarily on English, mathematics and science and less on other subjects. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has successfully addressed most of the issues identified in the last inspection report but aspects of assessment remain underdeveloped. It gives satisfactory value for money. The school has a satisfactory but improving capacity for further improvement as is shown by the positive results of its actions so far, the quality of its future plans and the strong commitment to raising standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure all teachers have high expectations and consistently challenge all pupils to achieve as well as they can, especially the most able.
- Extend the systems for the tracking of pupils' progress beyond English, mathematics and science to include all subjects, year groups and groups of pupils.
- Improve marking across the school so that it provides pupils with more guidance on what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. The school is aware that over recent years standards have declined and have been below average, and in mathematics and science, well below average. Last year's test results show the school did not meet the targets set in mathematics and not enough pupils reached the highest levels. There was also underachievement in English, mathematics and science.

Now, improved planning, better teaching and more rigorous assessment practices are having a demonstrable impact. The school's own information and inspection evidence show that standards are now rising, especially in Year 6 in English and mathematics. They remain below

average but are now closer to the national average, as pupils catch up in areas where they have fallen behind in the past. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are making good progress. The school, with good reason, expects the results in the forthcoming national tests to be an improvement on those of previous years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. One parent said, 'Our daughter is very proud of her school and she has really grown in confidence since she started.' Pupils enjoy their learning and find that the teachers make lessons interesting and fun for them. They feel safe and know that there is an adult to turn to if they have a problem. Attendance is now satisfactory. In the past some pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties caused disruption in lessons. Recent developments, such as the 'Well-being Team', have re-engaged these pupils, greatly reducing the incidences of poor behaviour and enabling teachers and pupils to concentrate on their work. Behaviour is now good.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of how to eat healthily, and the improved content of school meals and packed lunches, through increased parental understanding, helps this. The pupils understand the value of exercise and many take advantage of the numerous opportunities for extra-curricular sport. Many pupils, especially the older ones, make a positive contribution to the school community, the school council being a good example of this with their work for the 'Fruit Café' and the 'Whitstable Way'. Older pupils have an understanding of the skills and qualities they will need in the world of work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. There are missed opportunities to extend spiritual development but the pupils' moral and social development is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers' confident knowledge of their subjects and well-organised planning result in well-paced lessons with clear learning objectives. In the best lessons, teachers make sure that the pupils have a clear understanding of the purpose of the lesson. Staff are now better informed about the progress that pupils make and assessment is used well to pinpoint areas for improvement. Teachers' questions probe the pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking. When tasks are well planned and set at an appropriate level, the pupils respond well to the challenge. However, there are missed opportunities to challenge more-able pupils. In less effective lessons, expectations are not always clear, which results in inappropriate behaviour, and limited resources deny pupils the opportunity to investigate topics in depth.

The quality of marking varies greatly. It is thorough and well organised in Year 6, but this is not always the case in the rest of the school. In other year groups, teachers rightly praise pupils for their efforts but many comments in books are too general, with very little about what is needed to improve. Teaching assistants have clear roles and work effectively with targeted groups of pupils with learning difficulties to support their good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is enriched through further exciting opportunities such as themed weeks, sports clubs and study support programmes. It is imaginatively planned so that pupils enjoy a wide variety of experiences that bring their learning to life. Participation in the 'Reel Lives Project', where pupils learn about other cultures through music and drama, is a good example. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and the more able, for whom extra lessons are provided.

Specialist lessons, for example in mathematics, are successfully provided through additional work with a trained secondary teacher. All teachers provide French lessons. Interactive whiteboards are used well to stimulate pupils' interest and make learning fun and exciting. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the good range of clubs and activities, including many sports initiatives, provided for them at lunchtime and after school. They also benefit from the many visits, cultural festivals and residential trips and other events organised to extend and develop learning in class.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The high quality of care, guidance and support provided for the pupils enables them to make good progress in their personal development. The school has appropriate procedures to ensure pupils are cared for by appropriate adults and that any potential risks posed by their environment or proposed activities are properly considered. Pupils with learning, behavioural or emotional difficulties are well supported by trained staff. Links with outside agencies are particularly beneficial and effective in helping some pupils to settle and concentrate on learning. Targets for learning are well known to pupils and parents. The school keeps careful track of pupils' progress and gives effective support to those who are not keeping up. However, data is not analysed sufficiently well to provide a clear view of overall trends in attainment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior leadership team are increasingly effective and complement each other well. With a realistic understanding of the school's performance, they have taken decisive steps to bring about improvements in important areas in the current school year. They know what needs to be better and what action is required and they possess the necessary resolution and competence to achieve their desired ends. Middle leaders are increasingly accountable for the areas for which they carry responsibilities and are better able to carry out them out to the best effect.

Whole-school plans and reviews are detailed and sharply focused and act as effective tools to bring about change. The analysis of test data is improving but does not yet focus sufficiently on the progress of groups of pupils. The monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work is much more regular and rigorous. Inspection evidence shows that teaching and learning are improving and pupils are benefiting as a result. Governance is satisfactory and the governors are becoming more active in holding the school to account.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
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	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

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Whitstable Junior School, Oxford Street, Whitstable, Kent CT5 1DB

I am writing to you following the inspectors' recent visit to let you know what we think about your school. Thank you for your help in talking to us about your work and what you think about the school.

We think your school provides you with a satisfactory education and that it is good in a number of ways. It is getting better all the time. Teachers make lessons interesting for you. The school provides you with a broad range of subjects to learn and lots of different out-of-school activities. We saw that everyone in your school takes good care of you and you get on well with each other. We know you enjoy coming to school. You also told us that you feel safe and that there is always someone to talk to if you have a problem.

You show enthusiasm, behave well and work hard in lessons. Your parents are happy with the school and what it provides for you. Your headteacher, along with the other adults, is working hard to make the school even better for you. We think your headteacher knows the ways to make the school better.

We have asked the school to

- help you to do better in English, mathematics and science
- make sure teachers challenge you to do as well as you can, especially those of you who find learning easier
- make more checks on your progress in all subjects and classes
- make sure that the marking in your books gives you more guidance on what you need to do to improve your work.

Good wishes.

Ian Hartland Her Majesty's Inspector