



# Whitehill Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 121790  
**Local Authority** Kent  
**Inspection number** 292217  
**Inspection dates** 11–12 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Robert Lovett HMI

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 address</b>	Sun Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Gravesend
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		DA12 5HN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01474 352973
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	488	<b>Fax number</b>	01474 329007
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Tessa Barnby
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Porter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected		

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<b>Age group</b> 3–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 11–12 January 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 292217
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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**

Whitehill Primary School opened in January 2006 following the amalgamation of Whitehill Infant and Junior Schools. Whitehill Junior School was subject to Special Measures before amalgamation. The school is accommodated in two separate buildings. The new headteacher was formerly headteacher of the infant school.

The school is larger than most primary schools. Whilst the school currently has no teaching vacancies, there has been considerable staff turnover since it opened. Significantly more pupils join and leave during their school careers than is usual.

More pupils than average are entitled to free school meals. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

Since the school opened, it has worked with determination to raise standards and ensure all pupils are making good progress. In order to begin to achieve this, it has introduced a number of changes which have led to improvement. However, there has not been time for the many positive changes in the school to have had sufficient impact on pupils' achievement and standards. Because teaching has improved, progress in lessons is now satisfactory but the school rightly judges that standards are inadequate and overall, the school is ineffective because pupils have made too little progress during their time in the school.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards in English, mathematics and science and the progress pupils make.

An early priority has been ensuring that teaching and learning are at least satisfactory. The school has achieved this aim and, in addition, much teaching is now good, although lesson planning does not always cater well enough for more able pupils. Good support ensures that pupils with learning difficulties already make satisfactory progress. Good teaching is to be found across the school, with the best found in the Nursery and Reception classes and in Year 6. As a result, pupils are beginning to make better progress, although it is too soon to be able to see the impact on standards. If historic underachievement is to be addressed and pupils are to do as well as they should, the quality of teaching will need to be consistently good in all classes so that pupils' progress accelerates and standards rise.

The headteacher and members of the leadership team know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They have a clear understanding of what needs to be done and have identified appropriate actions in order to bring about school improvement. The actions the school has taken since opening are having a positive impact on important areas of school life. Pupils are very positive about how the school has improved, particularly in respect of their behaviour and how enjoyable lessons are. One said, 'It's like a different place, the school is so much better and calmer than it used to be'. The new school has been well supported by the local authority.

Because of the many improvements already in place, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- ensure teaching is consistently good or better in all classes so that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable
- raise standards in English, mathematics and science by ensuring learning is consistently good or better and meets the needs of all pupils.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Standards are too low and pupils have not made sufficient progress during their time in the school.

Pupils enter the Nursery with skills, which are well below those found in most schools. This is particularly true of pupils' speech and language skills. Because teaching is good in the Nursery and Reception classes, pupils make good progress, particularly in their personal and social development. Although pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2, by the time they enter Year 3, standards are still below average. Although progress in the lessons seen during the inspection was satisfactory, and sometimes good, the school's analysis of progress shows that in the spring and summer terms of 2006, in Years 3 to 6, it was inadequate, and at the end of Year 6, standards were too low in English, mathematics and science. They were too low across the school in writing. Standards are still too low.

Pupils who speak a first language other than English make the same progress as others. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because their progress is carefully monitored and there is early support if they fall behind. Challenging targets have recently been set for all pupils, with particularly challenging targets for those who have fallen furthest behind. The recently introduced procedures to assess how well pupils are doing are detailed and rigorous but it is too early to see their impact on progress and standards.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school and are friendly and polite. Despite the school's best efforts to improve it, attendance is below average. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and on the playground, but satisfactory as pupils move around the school. The school is working hard to help pupils to work and play well together and there are very few instances of anti-social behaviour. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and have a growing sense of being part of a community, as evidenced by 'Golden Time', when older and younger pupils work well together.

Members of the School Council are keen to take on responsibility and make a valuable contribution to improving the school environment through highlighting their concerns and working with the school to address these. Examples include improvements to toilet areas and new play equipment for the playground. Pupils raise money for charities and are also involved in local community projects and events.

Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle through developing good eating habits and participating in a wide range of activities, including the 'Green Footsteps' initiative. The school has a breakfast club that focuses on healthy eating. Within the curriculum, there are satisfactory opportunities to undertake physical activities, including an afternoon 'keep fit' session for Years 3 and 4. The school is

keen to support learners in developing skills for the future and is innovative in its practice of holding a careers week for all pupils and commercial enterprise projects for Year 6.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Since the school opened, the quality of teaching and learning has improved considerably and is now satisfactory. Whilst the best teaching is to be found in the Nursery and Reception classes, there is good practice to be found across the school.

In the Nursery and Reception classes, teaching is good because work is well planned and teaching focuses on what pupils need to learn next. Good use is made of the outside learning environment, which provides a valuable extra learning resource.

Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. In almost all lessons, pupils show good attitudes to their learning. In most lessons, there is appropriate planning to support teaching but the planning of work to meet the needs of more able pupils could be improved. In some lessons, teachers use questioning well to help pupils reflect and clarify their thinking. In others, questioning lacks challenge and ambition, and expectations of what some pupils can achieve are too low. Some lessons are too teacher-led so pupils are not encouraged to become independent learners or to participate sufficiently.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum provided by the school is satisfactory. It is currently being improved in order to match more effectively the needs of learners and address some continuing underachievement. Pupils with learning difficulties are the most effectively catered for. However, the curriculum for other groups, especially the more able, needs to be further developed. Teachers are becoming much more aware of individual learning needs in their planning, although this is least well developed in Years 3 - 5. The Foundation Stage curriculum provides rich experiences for learning.

There is a good range of enrichment activities such as focus weeks, visitors, and links with local businesses and secondary schools, designed to enhance the curriculum.

The grounds and facilities within them contribute to the extended curriculum. The school also provides a range of popular clubs and activities which help to develop pupils' skills and interests. Pupils report that these are a valuable and enjoyable part of their school life.

The school's ethos, based on its personal, social, moral and spiritual curriculum, is beginning to be used to increase children's awareness of society and their roles and responsibilities.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils say they feel safe and happy and that staff are very approachable. They know whom to go to if they need help or support. Child protection procedures are thorough and all statutory requirements are met. Pupils are well looked after and have good relationships with their teachers and learning assistants. The school employs a Family Liaison Officer who makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' care and maintains very strong links with a range of other agencies and the local community. The school acknowledges that standards are below expectations and has introduced new systems and procedures to assess pupils' levels of attainment. This information is used to help identify those who need extra support. Similarly, systems to monitor pupils' progress have recently been implemented which result in prompt action being taken for those who are identified as under-achieving. Whilst this helps them to improve their performance and meet their learning targets, it is too soon to be able to measure the impact of these initiatives on standards. Parents are kept well informed about their child's progress through regular meetings, home/school contact books and annual reports. Marking is inconsistent.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher has managed the difficult process of amalgamation well and provides good leadership. She has begun to develop a clear whole-school vision and to ensure Whitehill Primary School has a definite identity of its own. She is well supported in this by the assistant headteachers and the newly appointed deputy headteacher. The headteacher and deputy headteacher complement each other's skills well. The school's leadership team has a clear focus on raising standards and a good understanding of what needs to be done to make this happen. Good leadership in the Foundation Stage ensures that agreed systems and procedures are applied consistently across all classes. Subject leaders know their subjects well; they know where strengths and weaknesses lie and are taking effective action to improve teaching and learning.

Governance is satisfactory. The school improvement plan is good and provides governors with a useful means of monitoring progress and holding the school to account.

There was a high response rate from parents to the inspection questionnaire and a large majority were very supportive of the work of the school. A small minority expressed concerns about behaviour but pupils and staff were clear that behaviour had improved significantly since the school opened, particularly in the autumn term.

The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well. It carefully evaluates the progress individuals and groups of pupils make and is beginning to use this information to improve teaching and raise standards. Because of this, and given the strength and determination of the school's leadership and management, the school is well placed to continue to improve.

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## 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>	4
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	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

On behalf of all the inspection team, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we recently visited your school. The things you had to tell us helped us get to know your school well.

Yours is an improving school. The headteacher and everyone who works there is determined that it will continue to improve. You helped confirm this by telling us how much better you think things are. You said there is much less poor behaviour and much more emphasis on learning. You also said you felt safe and that if there was bullying or poor behaviour, you are confident the school would help to sort it out. You told us you enjoy school, particularly 'Golden Time' at the end of the week when you have the chance to select learning activities for yourselves and work with pupils of all ages. My colleague who looked at this told me how much he enjoyed seeing you all work together so well.

Because many of you have not done as well as you should, the standards you are reaching are too low. Whilst better teaching means more of you are now making progress and doing better, there is still a lot to do to make sure you all achieve as well as you could. Because of this, we have given the school a Notice to Improve, which means that another inspector will visit the school in about six months' time to see how well you are doing. The school will then be inspected again in about a year.

You can help the school to improve by telling your teachers if you find work too easy or too hard and by continuing to try hard and behave well.

I wish you and the school well and hope the improvements we have seen on our visit continue in the future.