

White House Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124660
Local Authority	SUFFOLK
Inspection number	293067
Inspection dates	3–4 May 2007
Reporting inspector	John Francis

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Doy
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Gerrie
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2002
School address	Waterford Road Ipswich IP1 5NW
Telephone number	01473 741438
Fax number	01473 743830

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized infant school. Most pupils are of White British heritage, although the numbers of children from minority ethnic groups is increasing and is currently about 5% of the school. Ten of these pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. Many more pupils than average have learning difficulties and disabilities, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is well below that found normally, particularly in children's personal, social and emotional development and in their communication, language and literacy skills.

The school has Investors in People status.

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 that provides good value for money. Strategies put in place by the leadership team since the last inspection have proved very effective and indicate a good capacity for continuing improvement. Improvements to teaching, a more varied curriculum and rigorous monitoring of the impact of these changes have resulted in a steady closing of the gap between the school's performance and the national average over the last four years. With the good provision in the Foundation Stage, children get a good start and achieve well. By the time they move into Year 1, children have made good progress, although standards remain below average. In Years 1 and 2, they continue to progress well and, by the end of Year 2, reach standards that are in line with the national average.

Teaching is predominantly good and classrooms are bright and stimulating. Pupils are clear about what they are going to learn. However, marking does not target recurring errors or gaps in pupils' knowledge sufficiently well. Pupils are well cared for and the good guidance and support they receive are crucial factors in the improvements seen in their personal development and achievement. This is a school that ensures that 'Every Child Matters'. It makes outstanding provision for all pupils' needs, particularly those with learning difficulties and disabilities, which is supported by excellent links with a range of professionals outside the school. There are secure systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and for setting challenging targets. With good learning opportunities provided through a lively and varied curriculum, pupils are enthusiastic about school. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and extra-curricular activities is good. Pupils try hard with their work, behave well, and enjoy their learning. Pupils' good social skills, their achievements in literacy and numeracy and their good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy prepare them well for the future. However, attendance remains low - something the school needs to continue to work at.

The excellent leadership of the headteacher, supported by good management at all levels, has led to steady improvements across the school. The leadership team has a good and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge is incorporated into a detailed school improvement plan. A weaker feature of this plan is that the expected outcomes are not clear and ways of measuring their success are not sufficiently sharp.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use marking more effectively to set short-term targets for pupils.
- Improve school development planning to give clearer, measurable success criteria and better systems for monitoring and reporting on the progress towards these.
- Develop additional strategies to raise pupils' attendance levels.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school's leadership has worked successfully to improve teaching, learning and the curriculum. As a result of these changes, pupils achieve well. Assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2006 show standards to be broadly average but with reading being somewhat weaker than writing or mathematics. However, far fewer pupils than average attained the higher levels in any of the subjects. While these results were a little down on the previous year, they were in line with the school's predictions and accurately reflected the make up of the year group. Nevertheless, girls did well, out-performing boys in all subjects, and attained above the national average in

writing and mathematics. With good provision and support, pupils with English as an additional language achieved as well as others and above the national average for this group. Pupils with learning difficulties also achieved well in all subjects and they too exceeded the average for similar pupils nationally. Pupils' current achievements re-establish the improving trend. Whilst standards remain broadly average overall, improvements to planning have enabled boys to achieve more and the proportion of pupils attaining at the higher levels has increased.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good relationships between pupils and staff foster personal development well. Pupils relate well to each other and show great sensitivity towards each others' differences. They enjoy school a great deal and relish opportunities to take responsibility, such as being a 'buddy' at lunchtime. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school because it is well managed by all adults. However, a few pupils still lack good listening and attention skills, especially during lesson introductions. Pupils are acquiring a range of skills that will be useful to them in later life. They have some involvement in the local community and the school council ensures that pupils' views are heard. Pupils understand about healthy eating and the benefits of exercise. Well balanced school meals, fruit and vegetable snacks and a strong emphasis on physical education and sporting activities support these developments. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. They celebrate other faiths and customs as well as their own, visit places of worship, have links to a school in Ghana, sponsor a child in Zambia, and support a number of charities. Although the school makes valiant attempts to bring about improvement, attendance is below average. This is often the result of parents taking extended holidays during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Improvements to teaching over time are clearly seen in the steady rise in standards and pupils' improving progress. This has been achieved through a variety of strategies: good monitoring by the leadership team and subject leaders, a close match of the curriculum to pupils' needs and the sharing of good practice. These have helped to develop consistency across the school. The effective work of teaching assistants is an integral part of this success. The work planned is adapted well to the needs of all pupils. Teachers have a clear understanding of what is to be learnt and share this with the pupils. This has helped pupils to develop an enthusiasm and desire to read and write, particularly amongst once poorly motivated boys. The good relationships and personal development of the pupils ensures staff can get down to teaching quickly. Lively, stimulating classrooms, good quality resources and effective use of interactive whiteboards ensure that children usually learn in active and practical ways. Marking is regular and supportive. What it does not do is identify some of the recurring errors or gaps in pupils' knowledge or use these to set short term targets for improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good focus across the curriculum on developing pupils' speaking, listening and communication skills helps them to make good progress from very low levels in these areas. Art and music have

a high profile in the school and are well supported by themed weeks. These provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills further and displays of children's art around the school are a delight. Physical education is strong, both in lessons and after school activities. Identified pupils also benefit from a daily 'gym trail' session to help improve their mobility. The curriculum is enriched by many opportunities to visit places of interest and an appropriate range of well supported after school clubs. There is strong emphasis on teaching literacy, mathematics, science and ICT. Good progress is being made in ensuring that basic skills are being taught through all subjects, although this is still being developed across the school. The school continues to explore ways of linking subjects together more creatively in order to make learning even more stimulating.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

From the Nursery upwards, good emphasis is placed on developing pupils' self esteem and independence. Adults know the children well and are sensitive to their needs. Good management of special educational needs ensures a good range of support to help lower attaining pupils achieve well. Teachers are approachable and pupils say they like their teachers, feel safe, and know they can turn to anyone if they have any concerns. They know that any bullying or poor behaviour is dealt with quickly and effectively. Child protection arrangements, safeguarding procedures and other health and safety procedures are all robust. Staff are appropriately trained and kept well informed. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the high level of care their children receive. Academic guidance is generally good and so pupils have a growing understanding of how to reach the next stage of their learning. Pupils have some understanding of their targets for learning and of National Curriculum levels. This remains an area for further development as the recently introduced systems for recording and tracking pupils' progress become established.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a clear, strong vision for the school, shared by all staff and the governors. Since the last inspection the school's leadership has put in place many effective changes. Good analysis of needs has led to higher standards and better achievement for all groups of pupils. A good partnership with parents, good use of resources and effective use of data ensure that children's needs are quickly identified. As a result, interventions can be put into place when necessary, ensuring excellent equality of opportunity. Regular monitoring and detailed evaluation by the senior leaders and subject leaders give them an accurate view of the school. This knowledge is used to inform school development planning. This plan is detailed and the key areas for improvement are appropriate. However, it has too many initiatives and is not always clear enough in showing what these will look like when they have been achieved. Governance is sound because there are some very active and knowledgeable governors. However, the governing body as a whole relies too heavily on information from others in forming its view on the effectiveness of the school.

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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?	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	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
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.

Annex A

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

8 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of White House Infants' School, Ipswich, IP1 5NW

Thank you for being so kind and helpful when Mrs Perry and I visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and what you think of your school. We agree that it is a very happy place to be. We have asked Mrs Gerrie to read this letter to the younger children who might not be able to read it for themselves.

Your teachers and classroom assistants work very hard and Mrs Gerrie does a really good job in leading the school. We think that your classrooms are exciting places and your displays look lovely. Your teachers plan interesting things for you to do and use the classroom whiteboards really well to make your lessons exciting. We also liked the way that you use computers to help your own learning. You behave well and try hard. We really liked the way you all help and support each other. You nearly all listen when your teachers are talking. This means that you are ready to learn, which is important. You do good work and do well in your tests. We think that some of you could do even better if you came to school more regularly, so you don't miss out on all the interesting things that go on.

Most of you know about the targets for your class and what you need to do to get better. To help you get even better we have asked your teachers to make sure that when they mark your work they help you to correct some of the regular mistakes you make. One other thing we have asked Mrs Gerrie to do is to make sure that when the school's leaders are planning what the school needs to do to get better that they make sure they can check easily on how well these have been done.

Your school is getting better all the time and if you keep enjoying your school and all you do, it will be even better.

John Francis

Lead Inspector