

Whatfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124718
Local Authority	SUFFOLK
Inspection number	293087
Inspection date	26 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Nelson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	25
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Leslie Legge
Headteacher	Mrs Joan Wardle
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002
School address	Rectory Road Whatfield Ipswich Suffolk IP7 6QU
Telephone number	01473 823309
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small rural primary school serving the village of Whatfield and the surrounding area. The school prides itself on the close links it maintains with the local community. All the pupils are White British. Around a fifth of the children are eligible for a free school meal. A very high proportion of the children have been identified as needing extra help, although none of them has a statement of special educational needs. A higher than usual percentage of children join or leave the school within the course of each year. The school has an Investors in People (IIP) award and is involved in a project called Cognitive Acceleration of Mathematical Thinking (CAME). When children start school in Reception many have not been to a formal pre-school setting and they lack some of the skills and knowledge usually found with children of this age.

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 offers good value for money, which is how the staff and governors see it. It has made great improvements since the last inspection because of the outstanding leadership, vision and drive of the headteacher. She has developed an effective team which ensures good overall leadership and management. Standards at the time of the last inspection were exceptionally low and there was significant underachievement. In the last five years standards have risen and are broadly average in both key stages. However, children's spelling is not good enough yet, particularly at Key Stage 2, and they are still developing their skills in becoming independent learners. The progress children make between taking the national tests at Year 2 and Year 6 is now good. Good provision in the Foundation Stage helps children to make good progress which continues in Years 1 and 2.

Excellent care, guidance and support arise from the school's ethos with its strong emphasis on treating others as you would like to be treated. As a result, children are encouraged to reflect on the consequences of their actions, and to respect the feelings of others. This in turn leads to good personal development and positive attitudes to school, though a small number of children find it hard to behave well all the time without reminders. They need regular encouragement to concentrate on the task in hand. The highly effective pastoral care has encouraged some parents to choose this school for their children who were unsettled at a previous one. They have been highly delighted with the way the staff have enabled their children to thrive at Whatfield. One commented, 'Whatfield school has embraced my children's difficulties and the emotional care given to my children has been outstanding.' Several other parents made a point of telephoning or speaking to the inspector during the inspection to express similar highly positive views and the inspection questionnaires confirmed this high level of satisfaction with the school. Close cooperation with neighbouring schools and excellent links with support agencies enhance the school's provision in caring and guiding children.

The staff pay close attention to the children's academic development. There are very effective systems for checking how well children are doing in their learning which enable teachers to plan work to match their needs and ensure they make good progress. As a result of consistently good teaching that includes very effective use of teaching assistants, children are well supported, and those who need extra help with their learning or behaviour progress well. Staff provide a good range of activities to help children to learn. The school makes effective use of outside specialists for some subjects like music and sport and provides an excellent range of after school clubs which children are very enthusiastic about.

Given the improvements since the last inspection in standards and achievement, resources and accommodation the school is well placed to continue improving further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Help children to improve their spelling.
- Develop further children's capacity for independent learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children start school with below average attainment and reach average standards by the time they leave. Standards at Year 2 in 2006 were broadly average in reading, writing and

mathematics. At Year 6 they were average in English where reading was better than writing, above average in science but below average in mathematics. The school's systems for checking how well children are doing, show that the current Year 6 are working at average levels overall. Results in mathematics are likely to be better than last year if the children do as well in their tests as they do in class work as the influence of the CAME project begins to bear fruit. Children's achievement is good because of the individual support they get in such small classes and, as a result, they reach the challenging targets set by the school. Children also do well in subjects other than English, mathematics and science with good examples of art, design, history and geography on display during the inspection. Children who need extra help with their learning are identified early and given good support so that they, too, do well. The school is working on improving children's spelling and encouraging them to apply their growing skills and knowledge to produce more sophisticated and complex writing. The good progress children make in their learning prepares them well for the next stage of their education and later life.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy school and attendance is above average. Behaviour is good from the vast majority. Although a small number find it hard to behave well all the time without reminders, the staff manage them well so that they have little negative impact on the learning of others. While most children work hard and concentrate on lessons, some lack the self-discipline and need adult support and encouragement to ensure they achieve well. There is no bad behaviour but occasional silliness from some of the boys. Children say there is no bullying and that the school is a safe place because they know the rules and what happens if they are broken. Children enjoy good opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community through school council, the road safety and the 'ECO' groups. These, and good provision for personal, social, and health education (PSHE) also raise their awareness of how to stay safe and be healthy which results in great enthusiasm for sport and exercise. They have ample opportunities to reflect on issues like change as the older ones face a move to secondary school. They learn about a range of cultures through work in art, music, geography and religious education which prepares them well for life in a culturally diverse society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The effective use of adult support ensures that children receive high levels of individual attention in lessons. This helps them to learn well because they get work that builds effectively upon earlier learning. In some lessons, for example, there are two or three adults for 15 children, so that they benefit from very high levels of individual attention. The one slight drawback of such good adult support is that children do not always show the levels of independence that might be expected of them. For example, in a mathematics lesson two boys in Key Stage 2 spent longer playing with plastic cubes than trying to solve the problem that had been given, although they were well able to do so without resorting to the cubes. The good adult to child ratio in the Key Stage 1 and Foundation Stage class ensures that the youngest children get the attention and the activities they need and are not pushed too early into Year 1 National Curriculum work. Teachers check how well children are doing regularly, set them targets and tell them how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The staff provide a good range of activities to help children to learn within lessons, after school clubs, trips to places of interest and through visitors to school, including a specialist sports coach and music teacher. Effective links are made between subjects so that children develop skills from one area while working in another. Staff make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) across all the subjects. Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy a good range of appropriate activities including an outdoor area outside the classroom. The school is developing an extensive outdoor environmental area designed to enhance the range of activities on offer once it is fully developed. Close links with local schools enable staff to share expertise and skills for the benefit of the children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school places a very high priority on caring for the children and this is appreciated by the parents. One told the inspector that, 'From day one the school was an extension of our family', so that the children settled quickly at Whatfield despite the upsets and the crying that had been a feature of a former school. The school's excellent reputation for coping with children who need extra support makes it very popular with families whose children have struggled to fit in elsewhere. Staff know the children and their families exceptionally well and are fully committed to providing for their individual needs. All the required procedures for ensuring children's safety and well being are in place. Effective systems for checking how well children are learning ensure that they get hard enough work and make good progress. Those who need extra help with their learning are identified very early and given the support they need to succeed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has gone from strength to strength under the excellent leadership of the headteacher. She works very closely with the Key Stage 1 teacher and together with the support staff they have become a close knit team with a common vision for the future of the school. Governors are highly committed and very supportive. They have a clear view of how well the school is doing and are fully involved in checking its progress and planning for future improvements. They have an increasing understanding of the information the school collects to check how well it is doing. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development based on effective and systematic procedures for checking how well it is doing. Having made good progress since the last inspection the key now is to consolidate and build upon those gains to raise standards beyond average and improve the children's progress even further.

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Annex A

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	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	2
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?	1

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	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	2
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

27 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Whatfield Church of England VC Primary School, Whatfield, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP7 6QU

Thank you for making me welcome when I came to inspect your school recently. This is the letter I promised to send you telling what I thought of your school.

You told me that you go to a good school and I agree with you. All the adults at the school go out of their way to look after you and help you to do well. Several of your parents spoke to me and told me how pleased they were with the way the staff look after you. You told me that behaviour is mainly good because you understand the rules and what happens if you break them. One or two of the boys are a bit silly at times though and let the school down with their showing off.

You nearly all work hard in lessons and this helps you to learn well and do well in your tests. You enjoy the close attention of the adults who help you because your classes are so small. However, sometimes this means that one or two of you do not work as hard as you might when an adult is not sitting by you.

You told me that you really enjoy all the clubs and activities that the staff provide for you and many of these help you to keep fit and healthy. You also enjoy telling the staff your ideas for improving the school through school council.

Your writing is getting better and I was impressed by the poems about fire and water that were on display. However, some of you still struggle to spell some words correctly and need to work on this.

Your school has improved a lot since the last inspection five years ago. This is because Mrs Wardle has done such a good job of getting the staff and governors to check how well everything is going and what needs doing next to make it better still.

Yours truly,

Ian Nelson

Lead inspector