



Whitleigh Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 132215
Local Authority Plymouth
Inspection number 293987
Inspection dates 9–10 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Collard

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lancaster Gardens
School category	Community		Whitleigh
Age range of pupils	3–11		Plymouth PL5 4AA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01752 706383
Number on roll (school)	314	Fax number	01752 237699
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Vernon Pinches
		Headteacher	Tracey Jones
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Whitleigh Primary School is a larger than average, urban community school that has now become part of a federation on an extensive campus. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is broadly similar to other primary schools. Extensive regeneration of the campus is taking place through a major capital investment programme financed by a Private Finance Initiative (PFI). This is due to be fully completed in 2008. The federation comprises this primary school, the community sports college, a residential community special school, a children's centre, a young person's referral unit and many integrated family support services. The headteacher of the primary school has recently become the interim head of campus and his deputy the acting headteacher of the primary school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Whitleigh Primary School provides an effective quality of education and this is the reason why it has improved so well since being amalgamated in 2000. Since then, standards have risen dramatically and, because pupils are taught well, their achievement is good. In addition, the excellent extended services have improved local aspirations meaning that families as well as their children have an improved self-belief. It is truly living up to its title of being a community school.

Children's attainment at three years old is low. Many have restricted language and social difficulties. Good provision in the Foundation Stage enhances children's skills and they make good progress even though many are working at levels below those expected for their age. By Year 2, standards are below those expected. By Year 6, standards are broadly average. In the 2005 national tests, the results, whilst below average, were better in English and science and showed high levels of progress between Years 2 and 6. The school's realistic self-evaluation recognises that these high rates were, in part, a reflection of the very much improved teaching and underachievement from the past. The 2006 figures show a more sustainable rise. However, the school recognises that standards in mathematics remain too low.

Pupils' personal development is good. As the outgoing chair of governors remarked, 'Pupils hold their heads up high now.' This is because there is a good curriculum that provides a raft of good care, welfare and support programmes for the parents as well as their children. An example of this success can be seen in the very high numbers of families (two thirds of the school) using the children's centre and the breakfast club, as well as accessing support from the on-site health, family liaison and behaviour teams. Five local mothers, for instance, are now being trained as teaching assistants, something they say they never thought would happen.

The newly federated school has brought many challenges and it would have been easy for the leaders to have become distracted. However, the good leadership and management are intent on continuing to raise the academic and personal achievement of the pupils presently at the school. Leadership systems are highly complex. There has been a complete restructuring of the senior team across the whole campus and many staff are relatively inexperienced in their new roles. While there have been many successes, such as raising teachers' expectations about what pupils are capable of, there has been one detrimental effect. The monitoring of attendance has not been as stringent as it should have been and so rates this year have fallen below the national average, but attendance is satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, from the many improvements that have been made during this very difficult period and from the plans for the future it is clear the school has a good capacity to move forward and be very successful. As the acting headteacher summed up, 'We are all ready for our exciting journey ahead.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics while continuing to ensure that achievement in English and science also improves.
- Improve the level of attendance by implementing more stringent monitoring procedures and effective remedies.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

While standards overall are at those expected for pupils' ages, achievement through the school is good for pupils of all abilities. This is as a result of the improved teaching, which is ensuring work is challenging. Nevertheless, standards vary between subjects. They are presently above average in science, broadly average in English and below average in mathematics. These lower standards in mathematics are caused by pupils having missed some important mathematical knowledge in the past and therefore finding it difficult to move on.

Achievement in the Foundation Stage is also good, although the standards reached by the start of Year 1 are below average. High levels of support are introduced at an early stage to help solve a number of personal and academic issues. For instance, teaching is highly focused on improving speech, and family support programmes help improve social skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy school and have really positive attitudes to learning. The school has successfully improved behaviour, which is now consistently good. Pupils are happy and feel safe in school. While there are still one or two isolated incidents, bullying is generally dealt with quickly and effectively and is much improved since the last inspection. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy, recognising the importance of regular exercise and healthy eating. For instance, they join in very enthusiastically with the daily 'Wake and Shake' programme, which makes a really fun start to the day. Many pupils keenly take up responsibilities as peer mediators and make good contributions to the community. Personal education is enhanced through suitable visits, visitors and community links with other schools. Pupils' understanding of what is involved in living in a multicultural society is not so strongly developed. Pupils' basic skills to support their future economic well-being are satisfactory. High on the school's agenda is raising aspirations so that pupils have every opportunity to be successful in later life. Surprisingly, given pupils' enthusiasm, attendance has dropped below the national average, but attendance is satisfactory overall.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The consistently good teaching and learning throughout the school is the reason why the achievement of pupils has risen so well during the last three years. Across all year groups, consistent planning ensures that lessons are balanced between learning facts and using this knowledge in more unfamiliar situations. As a result, pupils' progress, particularly in their use of language and in their scientific understanding, shows their increasing maturity. The school, in its improvement plan, has rightly targeted the teaching of mathematics because this is where pupils make relatively weaker progress.

Although some minor variability in the quality of teaching still exists there is no unsatisfactory teaching and there are some consistent strengths in nearly all the classes. Notably, the organisation of lessons and the methods used to engender interest are ensuring that pupils of all abilities make good progress from the low standards they have when they start school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils are very clear that they come to school 'to learn' and 'to be taught.' The good curriculum meets these needs well because provision motivates and excites children of all ages. It is broad and balanced with good attention given to all subjects. A range of good and effective links has been developed with organisations and partner institutions, including the children's centre. This impacts positively on pupils' self-esteem, their well-being and their eagerness to do well. Extra clubs and activities are much enjoyed by pupils. Older pupils talk fondly about their residential visit, which for many was their first taste of being away from home. They also relish their involvement in school productions and theme weeks. The school is well aware that time restraints caused by the recent building upheavals could have caused disruption but they have been managed very carefully.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are good. Up-to-date procedures ensure pupils feel safe and know whom to approach if they have a problem. Parents appreciate the good induction procedures to help young children settle quickly into school life. Academic progress is checked regularly and the guidance given to pupils is good. There are strong links with outside agencies to help support vulnerable children including those with learning difficulties. This overarching care is being recognised both locally and nationally as a very positive step for the economic well-being of the whole community.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher has kept the school on track and has not been diverted from the central aim of improving the academic and personal attainment of the pupils. She sets high standards in the efficient and enthusiastic way in which she leads the whole team. The good leadership is evaluative and perceptive, and governors and senior staff have an accurate view of the strengths of the school. Consequently, strategic planning is good and this year has rightly considered how best to manage change. Along with this, the senior team has also continued to monitor the teaching and learning rigorously. A recent comprehensive review of the campus management structure, while not yet fully implemented, is already helping to define specific roles and responsibilities including those of the governing body. Leaders have had to adapt quickly to the constantly changing circumstances. While the transition has not always been smooth, the school's overall provision has continued to steadily improve.

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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	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	3

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	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

Thank you for looking after us so well. It was exciting to join you in your lessons and to see all the new building and improvements that are happening at your school. As I promised, I am writing to let you know some of the findings from the inspection.

- You told us how much your school has improved and we can see that this is true. You clearly enjoy your lessons and get on well with each other. We think you behave well.
- You make good progress through the school, although you do better in English than in mathematics. This is something that your teachers will be trying to improve this year.
- You told us that you think you are taught well and we agree. Your lessons are making you think hard and are helping you to get better each year. We know some of you are having to work especially hard as you find learning quite difficult. Keep it up!
- You are very lucky to have so many different people helping both you and your families. This is really helping to make sure that your parents and carers have all the support that they need. We think that the whole community is benefiting from all this support.
- We have said in our report that the leadership of the school is good. You have probably realised that there have been many changes of staff. Your headteacher, along with all the other adults, is working hard to make sure that there is not too much disruption to your education, particularly when you all have to change classrooms soon.
- You will have to do your bit to make sure that all these improvements are as good as possible. One way, is by making sure you attend school regularly because some of you are taking too many days off. We are sure you realise that it is difficult for you to achieve well at school if you are not there!

Finally, we wish you all the best for the very exciting days ahead. We shall look forward to seeing how well the campus has grown when it is finished in 2008.