



Whitehall Nursery and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104163
Local Authority Walsall
Inspection number 294305
Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Chris Kessell

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	West Bromwich Road
School category	Community		Walsall
Age range of pupils	3–7		WS1 3HS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01922 721991
Number on roll (school)	245	Fax number	01922 721991
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mushtaq Ahmed
		Headteacher	Susan Speed
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2005		

Age group 3–7	Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007	Inspection number 294305
-------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated in an area of exceptionally high socio-economic deprivation and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. A large majority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Many children who join the Nursery have little or no English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is slightly below average. There have been many changes to the teaching staff since the school's last inspection. When the school was inspected in 2005 it was judged to require significant improvement in relation to achievement and standards, the quality of teaching, pupils' attendance and school accommodation. It was given a Notice to Improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Whitehall Nursery and Infant School now provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and has greatly improved since its last inspection. One parent summed this up by writing, 'The school has progressed fantastically over the last twelve months.' Staff are passionate about taking the school forward and the momentum is there.

Pupils in all year groups are now making steady progress and achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average but have improved. The improvement in writing standards has been significant. There is still work to do to bring standards in line with what is expected nationally, particularly in reading and mathematics, but, under the good leadership and management of the headteacher, there is the capacity to continue improving. Improving the quality of teaching and learning to a satisfactory level has enabled pupils to achieve more. Most importantly, lessons are no longer dull. New teachers have made a good start and teaching assistants contribute effectively to the pupils' learning. There is some good and better teaching. However, many lessons still remain satisfactory because learning is not quick enough and teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve are sometimes not high enough.

The school has a number of good features including the pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils appreciate what is done for them and are proud of their school, particularly the recent developments in the school's accommodation which have improved the learning environment. 'It's much better than it used to be' is a typical comment. The pupils recognise how far the school has come over the last year. Attendance has improved because the school has introduced a number of effective procedures to promote good attendance. The vast majority of pupils attend regularly but there is still a very small minority who do not come to school often enough. The pupils are very enthusiastic about the class attendance cup which they describe as 'massive'. The care, guidance and support provided for the pupils are satisfactory with the care and support elements being good features.

The school's satisfactory curriculum supports the pupils' good personal development well. The school acknowledges that there is still work to be done in improving the satisfactory curriculum, particularly in science and information and communication technology (ICT). It recognises that this is necessary to ensure that it contributes as much to pupils' academic development as does it to their personal growth. Nursery and Reception provision has developed well since the last inspection and is now satisfactory with a number of strong elements such as the development of the children's language skills. The children make at least satisfactory progress but, because their starting points are often very low, they do not achieve the expected levels by Year 1.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Planning for improvement is well established and the effective monitoring of performance is having a significant effect on raising standards and pupils' achievement. The first rate headteacher is well supported by a developing new management team and an enthusiastic governing body

with a number of new members. Education Walsall has also played an important role in helping to improve the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards further particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Ensure that all teaching is good, by improving the pace of learning and raising teachers' expectations to those found in good or better lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although standards are below average, achievement is satisfactory and has improved significantly since the last inspection. The results of the 2006 assessments were much higher than those of previous years. There were rises in all subjects, most noticeably in writing which was a school focus for improvement. The school is now getting on top of variations in achievement between different groups of pupils from the Nursery to the end of Year 2. The effective support given to pupils, who do not use English as their first language, enables them often to make good progress. The school has introduced a number of effective strategies to support White British pupils who were making the slowest progress. School data indicates that the gap between their performance and other pupils has been closed. All pupils' progress is monitored rigorously and this has contributed significantly to the recent improvement in pupils' achievement and standards.

The school sets challenging academic targets and has implemented a wide range of strategies to improve pupils' progress. The main focus for the current academic year is mathematics, following the success of the writing focus last year. The school is also working to raise reading standards. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has been significantly reorganised so that these pupils are making at least the same levels of progress as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their enthusiasm for learning and all that the school offers is reflected in the infectious and vibrant singing of one of their favourite songs in assembly, 'Give it all you've got.' Pupils try hard to do their best and have good attitudes to learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and reflected in their good behaviour, the successful way they work and play together, and the safe and sensible way they move around the school.

Pupils appreciate the school's strong focus on healthy lifestyles, taking full advantage of the fruit and drinks available at breaktimes. One pupil, representing the views of many said, 'Exercise keeps you fit.' The success of the school's initiatives to get pupils to eat healthily is shown in the fact that the school has run out of the insulated lunchboxes they were awarding to pupils who brought in healthy packed lunches.

Pupils play an active role in the school community through their involvement as MPs in the school parliament and as trained playground buddies. This, and the satisfactory progress that pupils now make in literacy and numeracy, contributes appropriately to their preparation for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory teaching and learning. Pupils enjoy lessons, concentrate and behave well. Pupils learning to speak English benefit from the skilful support from bilingual adults working in school. In all year groups, the effective use of teachers' marking and assessment of pupils' work are helping to set individual learning targets. As one pupil stated, 'I've got to work much harder with my capital letters and full stops.' Despite these procedures, there are a few pupils who do not get sufficient help and guidance to make progress.

Although lessons are well managed, they sometimes move at a slow pace and pupils are not pushed on quickly enough in their learning. On occasions, pupils are asked to sit for too long whilst working as a whole class and this, in turn, slows down the pace and challenge in learning. In good or better lessons, learning is more rapid and there is a greater awareness of individual needs. Throughout the school, relationships between teachers and pupils are first rate and this encourages confidence to try out new experiences.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. A good range of clubs and activities supports and enlivens learning, such as the Animation Club where as one pupil explained, 'We make things come alive like Wallace and Gromit.' Recent improvements in the provision for English and mathematics have contributed effectively to improving pupils' achievement and raising standards. The school acknowledges that there is still work to be done in other subjects such as science and ICT. The Foundation Stage curriculum has improved significantly and children engage in a lively range of experiences which encourage them to develop their speaking skills and gain in confidence. Since the last inspection, resources for their physical development have improved.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good quality care and support. Pupils learn and play in a safe and secure environment. The youngest children settle into school well. Child protection procedures are thorough and the school has strong links with outside agencies to support more vulnerable pupils. Links with parents are developing and the school has been successful in involving more parents in their children's learning. There are good

systems in place to check on pupils' progress. The information provided to pupils about how they can do better has improved since the school's last inspection, when it was a weakness. Despite this, it is inconsistent and better in some classes than others. There are times, in a small minority of lessons, when pupils do not fully understand what they are doing or how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides a good educational direction. She has a thorough understanding of all aspects of the school and what needs to be done to bring about improvement. The gathering and analysis of information about pupils' progress is rigorous. Teaching and learning are monitored very effectively. These processes for checking the school's effectiveness have been very important in driving improvement. There are now systems in place to ensure that all leaders and managers are able to evaluate the school's work whilst identifying what else needs to be done. Other senior managers in the school are developing their expertise.

Professional development is well established and linked to the school's priorities for improvement. All staff are supported well and work effectively as a team. It is difficult to believe that many of them have been at the school for less than six months. Governance is satisfactory. As with the many staff members, governors are developing their expertise. Many are new but there is a strong core group who have worked very closely with the headteacher to bring about improvement.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
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?	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	3

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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we came to see how well your school is doing. We enjoyed talking with you, watching you work and play, and singing so well in assembly.

Many of you told us how well your school has improved over the last year. We agree with you. This is the reason so many of you enjoy coming to school. Your work is improving. The school has got really good at helping those of you who are not working as well as others.

Your headteacher and the other staff have worked hard to make the school better and better. All staff look after you so you feel safe. As a result, you are well behaved and try hard with your work. Many of you have got better at coming to school more regularly. You are keen for your class to win the 'massive' attendance cup. There are still a few of you who do not come to school as often as you should do.

We have asked the staff to do two things that will make the school even better. Firstly, we have suggested that it is important for you to do as well in reading and mathematics as you do in writing. Secondly, we have asked that all lessons help you learn well so that you are making good progress all of the time.

We wish you all the best in the future. Keep up the good singing!