

# Witherwack Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108783
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sunderland
<b>Inspection number</b>	301952
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Inkster 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 category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	131
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Hartnack
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Bainbridge
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 June 2003
<b>School address</b>	Winslow Close Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR5 5RZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5535365
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 5535368

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Witherwack Primary School is situated in an inner suburb of the City of Sunderland. The catchment area consists of mainly local authority housing, a small proportion of which is privately owned. There are 131 pupils on roll, 36% of whom are entitled to a free school meal, which is well above the national average. There are a few pupils from a minority ethnic background. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is higher than the national average and a small minority has a statement of special educational need. The school currently has an acting headteacher. The school has been successful in gaining the Gold Smoke Free School Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory with some areas which are good. There has been a period of significant staffing turbulence over the last few years, particularly in the leadership of the school. The current acting headteacher provides good leadership and in the short period of time since his appointment, he has developed a clear strategic overview of the school. It is still early days but recently introduced procedures along with the clear focus on improvement, are starting to make a difference. The personal development and care, guidance and support of pupils are good. Pupils are friendly and courteous and have positive attitudes towards each other. The clean, bright and stimulating environment encourages pupils to take a pride in their school and they appreciate what the school does for them. Pupils benefit greatly from residential visits where they were fully involved in planning for the event. The school gives high priority to ensuring the safety of pupils and pupils acknowledge that they are well cared for. Those parents, who contributed their views, were overwhelmingly positive about the school. Witherwack Primary School has been proactive in promoting good attendance in partnership with other agencies. However, despite the best efforts of the school, the attendance of some pupils is still not as good as it should be and is having a detrimental effect on their achievement.

Pupils start the Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills which are more typical of much younger children. Good teaching in the recently established Foundation Stage unit is already starting to boost the progress of pupils. However, pupils begin Year 1 working at levels below those expected for their age. At the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average, but satisfactory progress is made by pupils from their starting points. By the end of Year 6, results show that standards have been mainly below average. However, the progress made by pupils during Key Stage 2 has improved in recent years. There are now signs that standards are beginning to rise due to the new strategies introduced into the school to raise the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making satisfactory progress due to the skilled additional support provided for them.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In lessons observed, high priority was given to catering for the different learning styles of pupils. The acting headteacher has introduced a variety of new strategies which are helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, these are not yet fully embedded and have not yet had a significant impact in raising standards. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. The curriculum is currently under review to increase opportunities for first hand experiences and forge productive links between subjects. Good opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills in lessons are beginning to have a positive impact on promoting pupils' thinking skills.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The acting headteacher and senior staff recognise that standards, particularly in English and mathematics, have not been high enough and are taking steps to raise the quality of teaching and learning. The role of the subject leaders is not yet fully developed and although plans are in place, most subject leaders have not yet been given the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the quality of teaching and learning in their subject. The good leadership of the acting headteacher is energetic and resourceful. Senior staff and governors know what is working well and what needs to be improved. The governors are determined to ensure that pupils reach their full potential and are rigorous in holding the school to account. The capacity of the school to improve is satisfactory.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in all core subjects, but particularly in English and mathematics.
- Ensure all subject leaders monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning effectively in their subject areas.
- Implement strategies which are consistent across the school to raise the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve the attendance of pupils who are at risk of underachieving.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Inspection findings support the school's assessment that achievement and standards are satisfactory. Pupil's attainment when they first enter the nursery is well below that expected for their age. Pupils settle quickly and make satisfactory progress. Overall, attainment is below the learning goals expected at the end of the Reception year, but well below in communication and language skills. However, the school has recently created a Foundation Stage unit and this is already having a positive effect in increasing the rate of progress of children at this stage. Standards in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 have been below average in recent years, apart from in 2005, and standards in mathematics have varied. Staffing turbulence has contributed to pupils' erratic progress but now there is more stability and evidence seen in lessons and pupils' work show that they are making better progress.

Results at Key Stage 2 in all subjects have been below the national average for the last four years, apart from science in 2005. There was a general improvement in standards from 2003 to 2005 but in 2006 this was only maintained in mathematics. The new strategies are leading to improvements which are dealing with the legacy of underachievement. The degree of progress made by pupils from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 improved significantly in 2004 and 2005 and, in 2006, was in line with the national average. The trend is now one of improvement and pupils are starting to achieve well.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupil's personal development and well-being are good. Pupils have positive attitudes to school and are friendly and polite. They say that they enjoy coming to school because 'teachers make lessons fun'. Pupils have positive relationships with the staff and with each other. The pupils say they feel safe at school and know they can talk to staff if they have a concern or problem. The school has not yet fully resolved the attendance issues identified in the last report. Very recently, new procedures for checking attendance have been introduced and the school is working closely with the local authority and other agencies to put into practice a variety of relevant strategies. These are now beginning to have an impact as many more pupils have had full attendance. However, the poor attendance of a small proportion of pupils is having a detrimental effect on their achievement.

Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to achieve healthy lifestyles and enjoy participating in opportunities for sport and exercise. Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development is good. The school has implemented an effective programme to cover the social and emotional aspects of learning. Weekly assemblies contribute effectively to pupil's cultural development as they lead them to develop respect for people in the community and those from other cultures. Celebration assemblies are attended by parents and are highly valued by pupils. The pupils have responded enthusiastically to the reward systems recently introduced and unacceptable behaviour is infrequent. In lessons and outside, pupils behaved well. Good relationships have been developed with parents and the local community. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community through their involvement with local groups, as well as through opportunities for fund raising.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some that is good. New strategies introduced by the acting headteacher are resulting in better teaching in the school. These include the way teachers plan their lessons to take into account the different learning styles of pupils and the use of 'Brain gym' which is improving pupil's concentration. The good opportunities for speaking and listening and drama are helping to improve children's literacy skills. There has also been an improvement in opportunities for practical activities and educational visits which are developing pupils' experiences and understanding. Teachers are beginning to use assessment systems more systematically to check pupils' progress and identify areas of underachievement. However, marking is still inconsistent and does not give sufficient advice to pupils on ways to improve their work. The classroom assistants provide skilled support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and booster classes cater effectively for the needs of pupils with LDD and those who are more able. Teachers and pupils say that classrooms are now bright and attractive with vibrant displays which prompt them to think more about their learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory in meeting pupils' needs and also statutory requirements. High priority is being given to promoting pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The school is currently in the process of reviewing the curriculum in order to create more first hand experiences for pupils and make better use of the outdoor curriculum. The high emphasis placed on personal, social and emotional development means that pupils are developing well in these areas. Pupils benefit greatly from residential visits which create exciting opportunities for learning. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and really appreciate visitors to the school who stimulate their learning. A wide range of extra curricular activities, particularly in sport, music and art, enrich pupils' experiences. There are strong links with many outside agencies who work closely with staff and pupils to enrich the curriculum.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff take very good care of pupils on a day-to-day basis, giving priority to building their self-esteem. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for. They say that bullying is rare and that any incidents are dealt with effectively. Child protection, Safeguarding, risk assessment and health and safety procedures are securely in place. The

school is extremely clean and well-ordered, creating a very safe and stimulating environment for pupils. There are very strong links with external agencies, particularly to support pupils who are more vulnerable. Teaching assistants are well deployed within the school and are now supporting learning effectively.

The school has recently set up rigorous new systems to track the progress of pupils. Pupils at risk of underachieving are identified earlier and immediate actions are taken to meet their needs. Pupils have targets for literacy and numeracy, and these are enabling pupils to understand what they have to do to achieve. The school are currently working on a new marking policy to ensure that pupils know how to improve their work. These new strategies are beginning to have an impact on the progress of pupils, but are not yet fully embedded.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The acting headteacher has taken suitable action to remedy key issues following a period of identifying the strengths and areas for development within the school. There are new, but effective systems in place to track the progress of pupils and assess the effectiveness of the quality of teaching and learning. Staff say that training is more focused and addresses whole school issues ensuring more consistency in learning for pupils. Subject leaders in English and mathematics have welcomed the opportunities to develop their skills in assessing the effectiveness of standards and progress in their subject areas. However, this system has only recently been established and not all subject leaders have yet had the opportunity to be involved in this process. They and the governors have contributed effectively to a new school improvement plan which is clearly focused on the Every Child Matters outcomes for pupils. However, whilst these new developments and strategies are of satisfactory quality, they are still too new to have had an impact on the outcomes for pupils.

The governing body is more closely involved in developing the strategic direction of the school. The governors are knowledgeable and have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the school. They bring a variety of skills and knowledge to the governing body and as a team, provide effective support to the acting headteacher and senior staff. The governors are committed to raising standards for pupils and rigorously hold the school to account. Over the last few months governors have been more involved in keeping an eye on the school's work through formal links between governors and curriculum areas. Governors have secured funding to improve the learning environment of the school, which has had an impact on improving morale and encouraging pupils to take a pride in their 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>	<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>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<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>	2

<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.

## Annex A

**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	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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

17 May 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Witherwack Primary School, Sunderland, SR5 5RZ

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school to see how well you are learning. I was impressed by your helpfulness and good manners. I enjoyed talking to you and your teachers and joining you in lessons and assembly. You have a lovely school and I know you take great pride in it. The school is very clean, bright and cheerful and is a safe place for you to learn. I was pleased to hear that you enjoy learning and that teachers make your lessons fun. Your teachers are working hard to help you learn and achieve the best you can. All the adults in school look after you very well. Mr Bainbridge is a good acting headteacher and he, the governors and staff all want to help you to do better. They have introduced lots of new ideas to help improve the way you learn.

I have asked the governors, staff and Mr Bainbridge to ensure that all the new ideas they have introduced are continued and developed and carried out by all staff in the school. I have asked them to help you to do even better in your work because your results are not as high as they could be, particularly in English and mathematics. I have asked all the staff and governors to make sure that all subject leaders ensure that you are all making as much progress as you can, by regularly looking at your work, their planning and seeing how well you do in lessons.

You can help by making sure you come to school every day. It is very important that you are there for every lesson otherwise you will miss important areas of learning. This is particularly important for the youngest children in the school to make sure that they have a good start to their education.

Thank you for all your help and I wish you every success in the future. You should be very proud of yourselves and your school.

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster

Her Majesty's Inspector