

Whitehall Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102411
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	307995
Inspection date	14 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	314
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P James
Headteacher	Mrs M K Bringan
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2004
School address	Cowley Road Uxbridge UB8 2LX
Telephone number	01895 671977
Fax number	01895 812690

Age group	3-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how the school is strengthening standards of pupils' writing; whether the school has good processes for raising levels of attendance; and how well teachers make use of assessments to accelerate pupils' learning.

Evidence was gathered from the school's analysis of pupils' progress, a scrutiny of samples of their work and observations of pupils in lessons. Discussions were held with staff, governors and pupils. In addition, the responses of 82 parents' questionnaires were analysed and their comments taken into account. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Whitehall is bigger than most infant schools. It has three classes for each year group and a 45 place nursery. The school has about double the national average of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. About half the pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are Asian or Asian British of Bangladeshi, Pakistani or Indian heritage. About a fifth of the pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. The headteacher is in her third year at the school. The school has gained the Healthy Schools and Basic Skills Quality Mark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Whitehall Infants provides a good standard of education. Parents are almost unanimous in their appreciation of the school. Their views are typified by the comment, 'The children are happy and want to learn because the staff are accessible, committed and dedicated'.

Pupils achieve well in both their academic and personal development. They are prepared well for their move to the junior school. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are much below those expected particularly in their communication and language development. They reach average standards by the time that they leave in Year 2. This represents good progress. In the past, there have been pockets of satisfactory achievement. For example, the attainment of higher attaining pupils has not been as strong as other groups. In addition, pupils' progress in writing has not kept pace with their progress in reading and mathematics. Neither of these is now the case. The school has introduced a wide range of measures to improve standards in writing. This has included initiatives such as being more systematic in the teaching of letters and sounds, providing more opportunities for writing across the curriculum and, critically, re-organising teachers' planning and the curriculum for teaching writing. The good focus on strengthening the provision and providing greater challenge for pupils that find learning easy has resulted in the proportion gaining the higher level in national assessments for 2008 being doubled from 2007 levels in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, standards have improved. The school is particularly successful in ensuring that the achievement of the many pupils that are at an early stage of learning English matches that of their classmates. Home language support is provided for many of these pupils, particularly those that are of Asian descent. Well-tailored support enables them to learn English well and to make good progress in all curricular areas.

The quality of teaching is good and there are some significant strengths. In many classes, teaching and learning are consistently outstanding. There has been a timely focus on strengthening pupils' learning and this is paying dividends in most classes. Teachers ensure that lesson objectives are made clear to pupils and that they know what they have to do to meet them. Furthermore, these success criteria are referred to throughout the lesson. In the best lessons, teachers use them to enable pupils to check for themselves how successful they have been. When linked to the high quality marking in most classes, this helps pupils to become more independent in their learning because they know exactly what they have to do to improve. Such use of assessment for learning strategies is a particular strength. However, there is a weakness. In most classes, pupils achieve well because the quality of teaching is consistently at least good. However, progress slows in Year 1 because the quality of lessons is satisfactory and staff do not use the assessment for learning strategies as well as in other year groups. However, learning is accelerated in Year 2 where much of the teaching is outstanding.

The adults ensure that there is a caring and supportive atmosphere in which pupils develop well. In addition, careful attention is paid to ensuring that all child protection and safeguarding regulations are met in full. Pupils love school and learning. As one Year 2 pupil said, 'We are excited to come to school because we are always learning new things and our teachers give us fun activities to do'. They enjoy taking on responsibility whether as a member of the influential school council or by being a playground 'buddy' who helps with equipment and makes sure other pupils enjoy lunchtime. Although almost all parents are fully supportive of the school a few said that they felt that behaviour was not good. There is no evidence to support this. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently good and relationships are very

positive throughout the school. Pupils themselves say that behaviour is good. 'The children whose behaviour is bad get better and nicer', said one pupil. Although the school has a few pupils whose behaviour is challenging, this is managed exceptionally well by staff and does not impinge on the learning or attitudes of others. Indeed, pupils are understanding and tolerant and go out of their way to help these few pupils to be part of the school community. Pupils' enjoyment of school is not reflected in levels of attendance. There are good and comprehensive processes in place to boost attendance. In addition, governors have recently been liaising with the junior school governing body to agree policies for authorising absences. Extended absences due to many families taking term-time holidays means that levels of attendance are below the national average.

All these strengths of the school do not happen by chance! The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and she is pivotal to the school's continuing success. She is much admired by the whole school community and many parents commented on her approachability, easy manner and the care and concern shown for each individual. Supported well by the effective deputy headteacher, she has successfully built on the many strengths found at the time of the previous inspection. She has distributed leadership and management by providing senior and middle leaders with more responsibility and, most of all, she has brought more rigour and accountability to the provision. Because she ensures that the contribution of every adult, whatever their role, is appreciated, staff morale is high and teamwork is strong. The school knows itself well. There are good processes in place to check both provision and standards, although the links made between subject leaders and governors could be made stronger. The good progress made since the previous inspection when linked to the good evaluations leading to clear improvements in provision demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well because there is a good quality and lively curriculum that is designed well to meet the needs of all. A very good balance is provided between those activities that are directed by adults and those that the children choose for themselves. The well-resourced outdoor areas in both the Nursery and Reception classes are used to full advantage to support children's development across all areas of learning. For the first time for some years there is now a qualified, and talented, teacher who leads the Nursery. This has resulted in an improvement in children's progress which now needs to be firmly established. Able support staff enhance learning and help to provide a positive and nurturing atmosphere.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Year 1.
- Secure the upward trend in the number of pupils gaining the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

23 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitehall Infant School, Uxbridge, UB8 2LX

I really enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you very much for the friendly way you welcomed me and for your help in finding out about your school.

Both you and your parents told me that you enjoy school and that you feel safe and well cared for. I am not surprised. Yours is a good school and everybody who works there tries hard to help you to do well. Your teachers work hard to make sure that lessons are made interesting and exciting. Your headteacher does an excellent job to make sure that everyone helps you all to work and play together in such a friendly way. I was very impressed with your good behaviour and your positive attitudes to each other. Your teachers help you to learn well and also make sure that everyone feels part of the family of your school. I was particularly impressed with your singing when I watched part of your rehearsal for the show.

You work hard in lessons so that you learn lots of new things. I like the way that your teachers make sure that you know exactly what you have to do to meet the lesson objectives. You make good progress and achieve well.

I have asked your teachers to do two things. Firstly, to make sure that all the lessons taught in Year 1 are as good as the best in the school. Secondly, to continue to help more of you attain higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the time that you move on to the juniors.

Thank you once again for being so helpful to me.

With very best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector