

Whitecote Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107970
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309554
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Ross Parker

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Law
Headteacher	Ms K Allan
Date of previous school inspection	2 June 2003
School address	Wellington Grove Bramley Leeds West Yorkshire LS13 2LQ
Telephone number	0113 2164800
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school is in an area of relative social disadvantage, and this is reflected in the above average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. An average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds, and all but a few have English as their first language. The school has gained the Stephen Lawrence Award, a Healthy Schools Award, the Inclusion Chartermark, Investors in Pupils and an International School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Whitecote Primary School gives pupils a good education. Outstanding care has a very positive effect on their confidence and social skills. Parents typically describe it as a lovely school where children are coming on in leaps and bounds.

Pupils achieve well and say that they enjoy their time at school. Unusually, most of the reasons they give come from lessons - such as making a cake in mathematics - rather than receiving special treats. They do not have the usual personal and social skills when they join the Nursery. Communication and language skills are well below expectations. Good teaching enables pupils to improve steadily as they move up through the years. They quickly make progress in personal development. They also make good progress to reach standards which are very close to average by the end of Year 6. Their mastery of mathematics is weaker than their progress in English and science. This is because many pupils are not independent enough to progress more quickly. They work hard to please the adults, but do not make sure they really understand what they are doing. This means they do not always carry their learning over from one lesson to another.

The outstanding direction of the headteacher has created a high level of consistency across all aspects of the school's work. Pupils get the same messages wherever they are in school, so that initiatives such as the one to build awareness of healthy lifestyles are very successful. Pupils understand about the links between eating, exercise and well-being, and they take good advantage of all the opportunities to put the ideas into practice. The established systems of care also means that pupils feel very secure and behave well. They know what they need to do to improve their work. They understand what is expected, and how they should respond. This shows up particularly well in their confidence to express their views in front of any audience. They know they can do it because they know that both adults and children will listen.

A strong focus on social education gives pupils a good understanding of how to play their part in different groups and activities. This enables them to make a really positive contribution to society in a variety of ways. For example, peer mediators help to solve disputes, eco monitors help to keep the school green and charity projects support people in need. Pupils are competent using modern technologies. They have good collaborative skills with particular strengths in speaking and listening. Feedback when they move on to secondary school shows that they have a good understanding of how to behave in a working community.

The school has successfully overcome weaknesses in speaking and listening skills and pupils' attendance which were issues raised at the last inspection. It has adapted and extended the curriculum so that it is well matched to local needs as well as the needs of the pupils. After significant recent changes in staff, the headteacher and governors have quickly built a new and united team. Leadership and management are good and the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is well managed and gives children a confident and secure start to their learning. Teaching is good. Staff understand children's needs very well and provide a good range of activities in a stimulating and cheerful environment. Secure assessments are based on children's spontaneous demonstration of skills. These provide the basis for the next layer of challenges that bring good improvements, particularly to personal development. Children

work and play together happily. They enjoy moving towards independence by working with their peers as well as with adults. Provision for outdoor learning is adequate but governors have plans to improve it. Transition to Year 1 is managed well by linking formal learning with play activities to help pupils to adapt to changing demands as they get older. For example, pupils felt as though they were playing when they conducted a numeric survey using tally charts.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in mathematics to match those in English and science.
- Develop pupils' independent thinking so that they can make links between the different parts of their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school's comprehensive tracking data show that pupils are making good progress across all years from starting points which are well below average. Skills at the end of the Foundation Stage are below expectations. Though results at the end of Year 2 have declined since the last inspection, pupils have still progressed well. The school's focused efforts have improved standards by the end of Year 6 over recent years. Science results reached average levels in 2006. They were sustained in 2007 when English results improved to match them. Standards in mathematics were below average, though the number of pupils who gained higher than the expected Level 4 went up significantly. Lower-attaining pupils try hard and successfully manage calculations in lessons, but they do not always grasp the concepts behind them, so their progress is restricted. Standards in Year 6 are currently below average, though the majority of pupils have already made good progress. Very careful monitoring suggests that the additional support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is helping them to make good progress. Higher-attaining boys continue to do well, so that the difference in the attainment of girls and boys is less than it is nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident, polite and welcoming and get on well with each other. This is because systems to support good behaviour are clear and consistent. The behaviour code highlights how well each individual is behaving, and rewards whole-class success. Similar rewards have helped raise attendance to average levels. The school is still working to reduce unnecessary absence by showing parents how this damages pupils' future well-being. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is a strong focus on the social and emotional aspects of learning within the curriculum. This means that pupils become reflective and thoughtful about their own and other people's experiences, though many find learning independently difficult. The school's inclusive ethos and good curriculum coverage support a good awareness of different cultures. The school council provides a good outlet for pupils' opinions. Council representatives are enthusiastically redesigning outside play facilities to enhance already good levels of activity and enjoyment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

A high level of consistency across the quality and style of teaching in all years contributes significantly to pupils' good progress. Classroom displays illustrate uniform approaches to behaviour management, guidance on relationships and aspirations and pupils' targets. Marking follows a clear pattern and pupils are very clear about how they can improve. They have frequent opportunities to assess their own work using the same criteria as their teachers, though teachers do not always check that pupils have grasped concepts as fully as they claim to have done. Teachers manage behaviour well. They emphasise positive features to create good relationships where pupils engage quickly with their work. Teachers use modern technology well to make the whole learning process faster and more fun. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that no one is left behind. They exploit pupils' good oral skills to build confidence before pupils write. They use questioning well to assess pupils' understanding and model correct responses very effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The particular strength of the curriculum is the range of additional services which meet local needs. These build on good links with partner schools and community agencies and gain consistent national recognition. They provide support for pupils who find learning difficult and empower parents to give their children the help they need. They also provide access to specialist facilities for sport and the arts. The strong focus on developing good personal development as well as pupils' safety and health underpins every kind of activity. Pupils really enjoy studying Spanish as well as the good range of extra-curricular activities. They were keen to hurry off from breakfast club to 'wake up and shake up' before school started. The school is progressing well in its drive to build links between different subject areas to make learning more coherent and more fun. Information and communication technology facilities are limited, but a substantial upgrade of them is imminent.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, support and guidance is exemplary in the way that it supports many children to overcome substantial barriers to learning and to gain confidence and personal skills that enable them to catch up with their learning. It does this in the first instance by ensuring that all achievement is recognised and respected. This showed well in a whole-school assembly where pupils' achievements in mental calculation were rewarded. Adults know pupils very well and treat them with a consistency, which has a huge impact on their confidence and behaviour. There is extensive, well directed support for pupils who find it harder to learn or manage their behaviour, or those who are not self-motivated. Systems for helping pupils to understand their targets and how they can reach them work extremely well. There are also extensive opportunities for parents to learn skills that will enable them to support their children's learning at home. Procedures to safeguard pupils are fully in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The recently established management teams are working well to ensure that the whole staff works together very effectively to provide a consistent and extremely supportive environment for pupils. The management teams have a very open approach to self-evaluation so that their view of the school's performance is measured and realistic. Despite the barriers created by the local context, staff have adopted challenging targets for pupils' achievement, and they monitor their progress towards these rigorously. Governors provide good support, with an extensive understanding of the local area, but also provide an additional layer of critical evaluation. The school is very inclusive. As well as addressing issues from the last inspection, the school has adapted well to changes in staffing and accurately focused interventions have brought steady improvements in standards.

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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
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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you all for the very friendly welcome you gave the inspectors when we came to visit your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and having the chance to talk to you. The school gives you a good education.

Here are some of the really good things about your school.

By the time you are in Year 6 you have made good progress, and are well prepared for secondary school. I was impressed by your considerate behaviour and by the friendly atmosphere in the school. You listen well when other people are speaking, and this gives you the confidence to speak out and express your own views. You have a good understanding of the atmosphere the school is working to create because teachers share these ideas with you. The headteacher and other adults work very well together so that you meet the same sort of expectations whatever you are doing. The ways in which they care for you and show you how to improve your work are outstanding.

I have asked the school to do some thing which will make it even better.

Standards in mathematics aren't yet as high as they are in English or science. I have asked the school to concentrate on mathematics so that you do well in all of your subjects. Some of you are not independent enough when you are learning. You rely too much on the teachers, and that means that you don't make sure that you fully understand what you are doing, or why you are doing it. I have asked the school to find ways of changing this and helping you to take more responsibility for your own learning, in the same way that you take responsibility for your behaviour or your work as part of a group. You can help with this by continuing to work hard, and by making sure that teachers know when you really understand new ideas well enough, and when you need a bit more help.