

# Wheelock Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 111036              |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Cheshire            |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 310486              |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 20–21 November 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Brian Padgett 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>                | 4–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 205  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr Peter Doughty   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Ms Susan Tomlinson   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 6 May 2003   |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Crewe Road<br>Wheelock<br>Sandbach<br>Cheshire<br>CW11 3RT |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01270 762878   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01270 759447   |

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

The school is of an average size for a primary school. It serves the village of Wheelock and the area to the south of the market town of Sandbach. Children of families from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds attend the school. Nearly all children are of White British heritage. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. A relatively high proportion of these children have more significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they have statements of special educational needs.

The school has national Healthy School status and has been awarded the ActiveMark for physical education and sport.

A separate organisation, Allstars, provides before- and after-school care at the school. It is the subject of a separate inspection by Ofsted, the report for which may be found on the Ofsted website.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Wheelock Primary is a good school. It is improving rapidly and it has some outstanding features. There have been many changes since the last inspection, mainly in staff, but also to the building. The new leadership team is proving effective, the staff form a strong and unified team and the impact of their rising expectations on children's standards is beginning to be seen. The care, guidance and support for children, already very good at the last inspection, are now exceptionally good. The school has a very good ethos. Several parents commented on how right it felt for their children when they first looked around the school, and how this influenced their choice to bring their children here.

Children achieve well. Their achievement over the past few years has varied between satisfactory and good. Achievement in English has shown the best improvement, in reading and, more recently, in writing. This improvement is beginning to raise standards generally, over the past two years in Key Stage 1 and more recently in Key Stage 2. Children's current work and the school's records indicate that standards are now significantly higher than indicated by national test results in 2006, and are an improvement over those in 2007. Many pupils are on track to exceed targets that appeared challenging just a short time ago. Children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make excellent progress. They benefit from the well organised support for children at risk of underachievement and the extra attention of the highly effective support staff.

Children's personal development is good. They are well behaved and have good attitudes to learning. In some respects, such as in their enjoyment of school (and subsequently, in their attendance), and in their participation in sport and physical exercise, children's personal development is exceptional. Their knowledge of how to stay safe and to be healthy is good.

A great deal of thought and effort has gone into making lessons and out-of-school activities as interesting to children as possible. The result is an outstanding curriculum, strong in providing children with opportunities to consolidate basic skills within a range of exciting lessons; for example, in the creative arts, in drama and in digital media technology. This imaginative curriculum, with its emphasis on learning needs of the future, makes a strong contribution to the school's excellent preparation of children for adult life. Teaching is generally of good quality. Some of the teaching is outstanding although a little is less effective in matching the work to the learning needs of the children, and in aspects of planning for lessons.

Although a new headteacher was appointed in January 2004, the new leadership team was only completed in September 2006. It provides strong leadership for the school and is well supported by a capable and knowledgeable governing body. The leadership team is making rapid progress in developing leadership at all levels, and in rigorously tracking children's progress. The morale of staff is high. The school has ambitious plans for development, based largely on good quality evaluation of what it does now. More monitoring is required to ensure development plans actually result in improved outcomes for children. Outstanding partnerships with parents, other schools and agencies have been developed that are very clearly aimed at providing the best quality of education for the children. The school provides good value for money and has a good capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Most children enter the Foundation Stage (Reception) having previously attended a pre-school setting. On the whole, although they vary widely, levels of development on entry are broadly within the range expected for children of this age. They make good progress in the Reception class, especially in early reading and in their social development. The opportunities to learn through play both inside and outside is enhanced by good quality resources and imaginative role play. Relationships between staff and children are very good. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Children enjoy their days at school. They are cared for exceptionally well and their development is thoroughly assessed and recorded. By the time they enter Year 1, they are confident and independent learners, most of whom are ready to take full advantage of the National Curriculum. The partnership with parents cultivated in Reception is outstanding. Induction is managed very well and parents are kept fully involved in and informed about their child's first year at school.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Where needed, further improve the match of work in lessons to pupils' learning needs.
- Ensure action plans for improvement relate more closely to outcomes for children.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Most children enter Year 1 with levels of development that either meet or exceed the levels expected for children of their age. Since the last inspection, achievement in Key Stage 1 has been patchy. However, over the past two years, standards at Year 2 have been above average, following a sustained improvement in reading and writing.

Standards in mathematics have been about average at Year 2, but children are currently making better progress as a result of action the school has taken.

Standards at Year 6 have also varied over the past four years. Generally, they have been above average, but in some years, such as in 2006, they have fallen to average. This does not represent good achievement for these children. However, over the past two years, as the new leadership team and teachers have become more established and effective, children's progress has improved and they are now achieving higher standards in the national tests (SATs), for example in 2007. The school's records of progress and the quality of current work in children's books shows quite clearly that this progress has been sustained and that children achieve well in nearly every class. They are set to reach high standards by Year 6, even in years where previous predictions suggested children would not reach average standards. The school is currently investigating whether its most able children achieve as well as they might.

Children who have difficulty learning for a range of reasons are identified early and special help in small groups arranged so that they are helped to keep up, particularly with their basic skills. Children with more severe learning needs and disabilities receive more concentrated support. Altogether, the school's work to ensure full integration is very effective and children vulnerable to underachievement make outstanding progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. It has outstanding features. The impact of the school's engagement with the government's Every Child Matters agenda can be seen in the good and improving outcomes for children; for example, in their knowledge of how to be healthy and stay safe.

Children's behaviour is good. They feel safe because discipline is effective, they trust their teachers to deal with any bad behaviour and they approve of the school's actions to keep the school free of vandalism. Attendance is very high (97%) and children believe this is because they are happy at school and want to take part with their friends in all the school provides, especially the outstanding opportunities for sport and extra-curricular activities. Attitudes to learning in lessons are good.

The school council can point to several successes and contributions it has made to the school and to the wider community. Through it children see how they can influence the school's development and, by supporting charities, improve matters for those less fortunate than themselves. Children are exceptionally well prepared for their future education and in their preparation for adulthood. They acquire important basic, social and emotional skills, they enjoy a broad education and widening cultural horizons, and they are introduced to information technology and digital media. All this places them in a very strong position to take advantage of further opportunities.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Most lessons observed had good teaching. Typical classrooms are well organised and rich with display, celebrating children's work. Typical teaching was good. Lessons were interesting with clear and high expectations of what was to be learned and good use of interactive whiteboards. The use and deployment of teaching assistants is extremely effective; teaching assistants are very professional and form valued members of the teaching teams, particularly in the support of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers' marking is often highly effective, involving the children in a genuine dialogue about their work. Outstanding teaching was seen with some highly skilled questioning that resulted in some exceptionally mature written responses from the children.

Where teaching was less effective, this was mainly because of a mismatch between what was expected and what children were capable of. The planning of lessons is left to individual teachers but at times, plans did not include all they should do. Talking to children about their learning indicated that teaching at the school now is significantly more challenging than it was in the past, and this is appreciated by the more able learners.

## Curriculum and other activities

### Grade: 1

The school provides an exceptionally good curriculum. It is strong in nearly all respects, being broad and interesting, and very relevant to children's aptitudes and interests. The basics of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology are provided effectively: staff

are up-to-date with modern developments in primary education and provide, for example, courses in developing children's social and emotional awareness, and a modern foreign language (French) as well as providing all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The basic skills are often taught through other subjects to make learning more meaningful, and the school has a long tradition in promoting the creative arts and drama. Staff are self-critical and have recognised the need to do more to promote investigative skills in science. The school makes exceptional use of local partnerships with secondary schools and specialist providers to provide extra opportunities for sport and music. The wide range of provision continues after school with many activities arranged and supported by staff. In Key Stage 1 and 2, children have the opportunity to go on residential visits.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides excellent care, guidance and support. This was a strength of the school at the time of the last inspection that is even better now. It is an aspect particularly appreciated by parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nowadays, each school must meet demanding requirements for children's health and safety, to safeguard them from abuse, to assess risks and ensure their well-being. The school meets all the requirements.

It provides exceptional guidance for children's academic progress in the rigour of its progress tracking system, the quality of teachers' marking and its interventions when children are at risk of underachievement. It provides very good social and emotional guidance for children, helping them to solve problems and become independent. The headteacher has established excellent partnerships with local secondary schools and with other schools and agencies within and outside of Cheshire. The partnership with parents is very strong. The school provides family support sessions to help parents support their children at home. It regards parents as true partners in the education of their children, a finding supported by a number of positive responses from parents to the parents' questionnaire.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good overall. The grade reflects in part the satisfactory progress made in the years following the last inspection as well as the rapid progress made recently, particularly over the last year or so. The leadership team of headteacher, deputy headteacher and early years coordinator is now complete. It is an effective team with complementary strengths. It is proving far-sighted and outward looking, and remains faithful to the school's reputation for respecting and valuing all children as individuals. It is rigorous in its self-evaluation and its ability to motivate staff. This is well demonstrated by the improvement in writing in recent years and in the identification of the need to improve the teaching of science. It has put in place a secure tracking system to monitor children's progress. At present, its development plans do not always focus sufficiently on outcomes for children. There is clear evidence of success in the improving standard of children's work, their progress year-on-year and their increasing enjoyment of school. Based on the progress being made, the leadership team is setting very challenging targets for national, end-of-key stage tests. The school expects to see high standards reached by children in these annual national tests at Year 6, even in those years that were previously predicted to do badly.

The development of subject leadership is proceeding well. All subject leaders have plans for the development of their subjects and give regular reports to governors on the progress they are making. Staff commit to, learn from and share the benefit of their training courses. The philosophy of the school that all staff are leaders includes teaching support staff who take part in planning for and observations of lessons.

Governance is good. Some aspects, such as the governance of special educational needs, are exceptional. Governors are organised well and work effectively through committees. They are closely involved in the work of the school and have aligned themselves with classes and subjects to better understand the work of the school. They are aware of the standards achieved by the school, such as the drop in standards in 2006, and play a significant role in its strategic development.



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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 |
|---|----------------|

### 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?   | 1   |
| 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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 2 |
| 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                              | 1 |

### 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   | 1 |
| The attendance of learners  | 1 |
| 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 | 1 |

### 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? | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 1 |

<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>                                       | 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  |

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Wheelock Primary School, Sandbach, CW11 3RT

You may remember that Mrs Jones and I visited your school recently to find out how well you were learning. This letter is to tell you the main findings of the inspection. We talked to many of you during the two days we were at Wheelock. We would like to thank you for telling us about what you were doing in lessons and for sharing your views of the school.

We judged your school to be a good school that is rapidly getting better. Your parents told us that it has always been a very caring school that treats every child as an individual. We saw that the care and support for children in Wheelock is second to none, especially if you have difficulty learning or feel unhappy for some reason. We noticed that from Reception to Year 6, your lessons are often exciting. They capture your interest and you learn well. You also have a very good range of activities to keep you interested and learning when school finishes. We thought you were well behaved and responsible and that you took care of each other.

Before we came to your school, we looked at the results you had achieved. We felt they might be better. However, when we looked at your work on the visit and talked to your teachers we saw that you are now making much better progress and are on track to achieve higher standards.

Your teachers and the governors have good plans to make the school even better and more successful. To help them, we suggested an idea to make it more likely their plans will work, and to improve the planning of your lessons.

Your teachers want the best for you. They have very high expectations of you. This is good for your future but success will only come if you work as hard as you can. Our evidence suggests you will do this.