

Whitehouse Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111549
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	310625
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Graeme Clarke

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	380
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Garside
Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Crispin
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2005
School address	Dunelm Road Elm Tree Farm Stockton-on-Tees TS19 0TS
Telephone number	01642 678212
Fax number	01642 678212

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Whitehouse is a larger than average primary school. Most pupils in the main school come from the west of Stockton, which is an area where socio-economic characteristics are broadly average. Almost all are of a White British heritage. Others come from mainly Asian minority ethnic groups and some are learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average because the school has a special unit to provide for the educational and therapeutic needs of 42 pupils from the Stockton area who have complex medical and physical learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has Basic Skills, Information and Communication Technology, Investors in People, the Healthy Schools and Artsmark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Whitehouse Primary School provides a satisfactory education. The headteacher, very ably supported by her senior colleagues, promotes a clear philosophy that every child does matter. She successfully ensures that all pupils are able to take as full a part in school life as possible. A very small minority of parents express concerns about the school, mostly about the extent to which it takes account of their views. However, the great majority have full confidence in the school and hold it in the highest regard. Two comments represent their views well:

‘Whitehouse staff make learning enjoyable. They have always been there to support both my children and myself with my children’s learning’ and, ‘my daughter is a special needs pupil ... she is extremely happy, always looks forward to going to school and enjoys joining in with the activities. She feels part of the class and has bonded well with the staff’.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities the school offers. Visits, visitors, special activity weeks and after school clubs enhance pupils’ good personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils’ enthusiasm and cheerfulness, in and out of lessons, show how much they like school. They behave impeccably in lessons. They act sensibly and safely, and thoroughly enjoy the extensive adventure equipment in the playground. Pupils make sensible choices to foster a healthy lifestyle. They make a good contribution to their school community, and their very considerate behaviour towards each other is a clear indication of the school’s success in integrating pupils of all abilities. They generously support children’s charities and willingly sing for residents of a local care home. Pupils’ competent social and basic skills satisfactorily prepare them for moving on to secondary school.

Teaching is satisfactory, with some aspects that are good. Improvements in teaching mathematics have enabled pupils in the main school to make good progress and reach above average standards at the higher level in the 2007 Year 6 national tests. However, pupils’ standards in English, especially in writing, are below average both at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Teaching has not been focused enough to enable pupils who began Year 3 with above average standards to make as much progress as they should by Year 6, especially in English. The school’s provision to support the academic and personal development of pupils with complex physical and medical learning impairment excels in many ways. Exceptionally skilled teaching and very effectively managed learning support are in a large measure responsible for their accomplishments.

Arrangements for gathering and recording information relating to safeguarding children have only recently been consolidated, but checks during the inspection show no cause for concern over the safety of children. The headteacher, senior staff and governors work closely together to monitor and evaluate the school’s work. They recognise that making improvements in English is a high priority. Some judgements are accurate, but they overestimate achievement and the quality of teaching because their use of data about pupils’ performance lacks sufficient clarity. They have addressed issues raised at the last inspection but standards have broadly stood still since then. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children begin the Foundation Stage with levels of basic reading and mathematics below those broadly typical for their age. Good leadership and effective organisation help their development. Teachers carefully plan activities that interest children, encourage independence

in choosing activities and, at other times, skilfully direct children to tasks that support them in all areas of learning. Good teaching imaginatively links activities and makes effective use of indoor and outdoor facilities. Parents are delighted that their children settle quickly and follow classroom routines well. Children learn how to stay healthy, for example, by encouragement to follow simple hygiene rules. The Foundation Stage caters well for children with complex physical or medical learning needs. Their progress too is very carefully monitored and specialist staff give skilled support so these children make good progress. All groups of children make good progress and enjoy learning. Almost two thirds of them reach, and a few exceed, the goals expected of five-year-olds at the end of the Reception year. Although staff gather information from assessing children's work, it is not rigorously used to evaluate progress overall in the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and increase progress in English, particularly for higher attaining pupils.
- Make more use of information from assessing pupils' work to help evaluate the work of the school more precisely.
- Ensure greater rigour in gathering and recording information on the safeguarding of pupils.

A small proportion of the 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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils in the mainstream classes usually reach average standards by the end of Year 2. In 2007, however, standards were below average overall, because of the results in reading and writing. Their performance in mathematics was average. In the statutory tests in 2007, standards at the end of Year 6 were broadly average. They were above average in mathematics and science because of good performance at the higher Level 5. Standards were below average in English, because not enough pupils achieved this higher level. Standards in English have slipped a little in recent years in both Years 2 and 6, although standards in mathematics and science have remained reasonably constant. Because of the effective support they receive, pupils with learning difficulties make good progress and reach standards above the average of pupils with similar special educational needs elsewhere.

Pupils with complex learning difficulties that result from physical or medical disabilities make very good, clear and measurable progress in almost every area of learning. Carefully tailored assessments together with highly skilled support show that although the steps are small for some, they represent remarkable achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle; they make sensible choices at lunchtime and many willingly take part in a wide range of after school physical activities. Pupils speak confidently of how they feel safe in school. They act very sensibly in and out of doors. They are aware too of different forms of bullying, such as by text or email, and comment that levels of bullying are low in school. Behaviour is good. Pupils are considerate towards one another, and talk politely

and confidently with adults. Attendance is broadly average. Pupils enthusiastically contribute in lessons, enjoy their work and are keen to learn. Through their school council, pupils make a good contribution to school life and the community. They are justifiably proud that the school has acted on their recommendations, such as fitting electric access doors for wheelchair users and holding fairs to help raise funds. They willingly support charities locally and further afield, and help enhance life for residents of local care homes. Pupils' competent social and basic skills prepare them satisfactorily for moving on to the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some aspects that are good. Expertly coordinated intensive work by teachers and teaching assistants ensures pupils with complex disabilities and learning difficulties make outstanding progress. Throughout the school, teaching is most effective when teachers and teaching assistants carefully align work to pupils' abilities, as in some mathematics lessons. They encourage pupils to apply their knowledge in tasks which suit them and to explain their ideas, which reinforce understanding. At other times, activities are insufficiently well matched to pupils' abilities to extend their learning, particularly in writing. Here, tasks are too difficult for pupils with limited reading skills or do not challenge higher attaining pupils to think deeply. Such inconsistency limits some pupils' achievement.

The school follows a thorough process to set learning targets but does not yet consistently use them effectively to raise pupils' standards. For example, in Key Stage 2 English, marking celebrates pupils' accomplishments, clearly relates to targets and gives them useful information to improve specific aspects of their work. Elsewhere, marking does not always refer to targets or standards, or correct spelling, which is less helpful to pupils in promoting their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Pupils benefit from a wide and balanced range of activities in all subjects, enriched by visitors to school and visits outside. Extensive and popular extra curricular activities, and opportunities at a residential outdoor activities centre, help develop team-building skills and add to pupils' physical, social and cultural development. Other aspects of personal and social education are well taught through a nationally recognised programme, and are further enhanced through partnerships with a nearby residential home for the elderly, local supermarkets and the Community Association. Pupils' awareness of their own and the wider community is successfully developed through an established link with a school in South Africa and through local studies, which strengthen knowledge of their community and its industrial heritage. The school is implementing advice and ideas from the Primary National Strategy to improve the literacy curriculum, but these have yet to impact positively on raising standards in writing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's arrangements for the care, guidance and support of its pupils are satisfactory. Some aspects stand out; for example, exemplary partnerships with health and other support agencies jointly foster the personal development and well-being of pupils with physical and medical learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Effective supervision and sensible arrangements allow pupils to play energetically and enjoy the outdoor play equipment safely. Pupils particularly appreciate the way the school celebrates their successes in 'good work' assemblies, and encourages them to try harder. Staff training for child protection is up to date. However, the school has been slow to implement government requirements to vet and record relevant information about all staff in relation to safeguarding children.

The school has recently improved its procedures for tracking and analysing pupils' progress and achievement. Information is used well to identify and support lower attaining pupils who are at risk of falling behind, but not sufficiently to foster the progress of higher attaining pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The senior leadership team successfully fosters a positive climate for learning throughout the school in which pupils thrive. The headteacher, senior staff and governors work harmoniously together. In this well integrated school, everyone promotes the principles of 'Every Child Matters', particularly in relation to pupils' personal development. Governors have not fulfilled their obligations to meet all government requirements. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement in relation to pupils' standards of work. However, they overestimate pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching because their self-evaluation is not sufficiently analytical to make best use of the wealth of information available about pupils' progress.

Annual statutory targets for pupils' performance are challenging. Mathematics standards reached the targets set, but English standards fell a long way short, especially at the higher Level 5. The school gives priority in its development plan to redress the dip in standards in English but it is too early to gauge its effect. The school does not use procedures for setting challenging targets for individual pupils with sufficient precision or consistency throughout. Overall, value for money is satisfactory. The school uses resources well in some ways, for example, to minimise the time pupils with physical or medical disabilities lose from school whilst attending clinical appointments.

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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?	3
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	3

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	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	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?	2
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.

Annex A

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

1 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitehouse Primary School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 0TS

Mrs Firth, Mr Hill and I really enjoyed our visit to your school this week. Thank you for helping us when we came into your classrooms and assemblies to see you at work. We did enjoy talking with those of you whom we met. You were exceptionally polite and very helpful. It was great to see how confident you are, how much you enjoy coming to school and learning, how well behaved and considerate to others you are and how much you contribute to school life. I know the headteacher and all the staff are rightly very proud of you.

Overall, your school provides a satisfactory education. Some aspects of its work are good. It is very warm and welcoming. All the adults in the school look after you well and that is why you feel safe and happy. Some of your lessons are good, especially in mathematics, and some are satisfactory. We were impressed with the way your teachers share the purpose of the lesson with you and that you know what they expect you to do. We were also impressed with the way you work hard and like to take part. Last year, many pupils made good progress and did very well in mathematics and science, but not well enough with English, especially writing.

I have asked the school to help all of you to improve your writing. I have also asked the governors and staff to review the work of the school carefully in order to improve all of its benefits for you.

You have very many opportunities at Whitehouse Primary School to learn about life and these should stand you in good stead for the future. I hope that you all do really well.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Clarke

Lead inspector