

Whitstone Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111941
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310735
Inspection date	25 November 2008
Reporting inspector	John Laver

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	51
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Barrett
Headteacher	Paul Woolner
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Oak Lane Whitstone Holsworthy EX22 6TH

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	25 November 2008
Inspection number	310735

Telephone number
Fax number

01288 341241
01288 341241

Age group	4-11
Inspection date	25 November 2008
Inspection number	310735

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Whitstone Community Primary School is a much smaller than average school. It takes pupils from a wide geographical area, and an unusually high proportion of pupils join the school at other than the usual times. Pupils come from a predominantly White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, which encompass mostly moderate learning difficulties, varies considerably from year to year, but is currently below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also below average. Because the school has relatively small numbers of pupils across the primary age range, they are taught in small mixed-age classes. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in its Reception class. Other than the headteacher, all the current teaching staff are part time.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Whitstone Community Primary School provides a good standard of education. The school is in a sparsely populated area and has well below average pupil numbers. Nevertheless, in addition to ensuring good academic progress, the school also successfully works to ensure that pupils have an increasingly rich experience of the wider world through visits and developing links with other schools in France, Turkey and Italy. In so doing, the school is contributing to pupils' outstanding personal development, which is one of the strengths of the school. Parents also greatly appreciate the good care and support the school provides. 'The school atmosphere is very friendly and inclusive'; 'committed and caring – a super little school'; and 'children are educated well, based on their individual needs' are typical of many parental comments.

In such a small school, it is difficult to sustain consistent trends in academic progress. Nevertheless, children generally join Reception with standards just below typical expectations for their age group, particularly in language and communication skills. By the end of Reception, children have made good progress, which is then sustained as pupils progress through the school. The above average standards were reflected in the recent 2008 un-validated national test results for 11-year-olds, particularly in the proportions attaining the higher levels, despite a relative weakness in writing. Pupils' good achievement is particularly impressive given that a high proportion of pupils join the school other than at the usual times.

Pupils' outstanding personal development is evident particularly in their excellent behaviour, very positive attitudes towards learning, above average attendance and obvious enjoyment of all aspects of school life. Pupils are taught well, and the school has begun to address weaker aspects such as writing skills. Increased opportunities to improve writing through curriculum projects such as the 'river' exercise encourage pupils to write in response to a range of stimuli outside the classroom. However, writing is not yet developed consistently across all subject areas in such a way as to further raise writing standards. Pupils learn well when the teaching is well paced and appropriately challenging. Teaching is less effective when the marking of work does not give sufficient indication of exactly how pupils can improve to the next level, and insufficient use is made of pupils' targets to boost their learning.

The headteacher deserves much of the credit for good overall progress. He not only leads the drive for improvement but has to shoulder many management responsibilities. Other staff share his vision for improvement and desire to broaden pupils' horizons. Parents rightly acknowledge the contribution of all staff. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, notably in the much better provision for information and communication technology (ICT). This improvement is accompanied by a realistic appreciation of the school's strengths and areas for development, and by good strategic planning. This combination means that the school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

EYFS provision is good. Excellent links with the on-site pre-school help children settle quickly into Reception, and then they make good progress in all areas of learning. There is a good balance of practical activities which involve learning through play, seen in the 'Goldilocks' role-play, along with the more formal teaching of letters and sounds. The outdoor area is used well for planned activities, although there are sometimes limited opportunities for children to

make choices about whether to learn outdoors or indoors. The experienced EYFS leader has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development, and has high expectations, to which children respond well. Very good relationships are a strength, and good welfare arrangements are a priority, so that children feel secure at all times. There is good assessment of children's progress, and the information contained in the well-presented learning journals is shared regularly with parents, thereby involving them successfully in their children's learning. The assessment arrangements also result in good planning to meet children's individual needs. Therefore the children are motivated to learn, are happy and achieve well. In addition, the good experience Reception pupils have of joint learning sessions with Year 1 means that they are well prepared when they themselves become part of this year group in the following year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Mark work more informatively and make consistent use of individual targets to show pupils how to improve their work even more.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to practise writing skills across all subjects, in such a way as to raise standards in writing.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils in the EYFS to choose activities indoors and outside so that they develop their levels of independence.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' standards are above average by the age of 11, and they achieve well throughout the school. Most of the time pupils meet appropriately challenging school targets. All pupils share in the good progress, including those with learning difficulties and the most able pupils, who benefit from learning opportunities such as 'special learning days' provided in conjunction with some other small local schools. Although achievement is good overall, progress in writing is slower than in other subject areas. This is partly because teachers sometimes place too much reliance on worksheets and miss opportunities for pupils to do more extensive writing in subject areas other than literacy. Compared to previous years, pupils now achieve better in ICT, where provision has been considerably improved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The development of spiritual awareness was very evident in an assembly on the theme of friendship, with meaningful opportunities for reflection. Pupils are polite and very well behaved, caring towards each other and cooperate excellently. Pupils enjoy opportunities to take responsibility, for example leading the popular 'Wake and Shake' sessions and serving on the school council, as well as representing the school very positively in the local community. Pupils are knowledgeable about why it is important to have a healthy lifestyle. They say they feel secure in school, and the school gives safety a high priority in its programme for personal, social and health education. In addition to developing good academic standards, pupils gain confidence and enterprise skills through activities such as running charities, and as a result they are well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers plan activities well, taking account of the different levels of ability as well as the different age groups within the same classes. The majority of teaching is of good quality, and is characterised by good questioning, good class management which keeps pupils well focused and on task, and good use of resources such as ICT to interest pupils. Teachers also use teaching assistants and other adults well to help individual pupils, particularly the more vulnerable, increase their understanding and develop their skills so that they achieve as well as other pupils. Teachers use learning objectives well and praise pupils constructively, which motivates them. However, pupils themselves are unsure about their targets and would welcome more written feedback which includes comments that let them know how to further improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school works successfully to ensure that the curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of all pupils in mixed-age classes. Teachers are beginning to make more links between subjects. Although the school has started to address the relative weakness in pupils' writing, there are currently insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills across a range of subjects. In such a small school, there is a limited range of clubs, but the curriculum has significant strengths. There is a good range of visits, for example to synagogues and temples in Bristol and Exeter, enabling pupils to experience different faiths. Parents provide valuable financial support so that all pupils can swim, and specialist outside help ensures good provision for physical education and for teaching French. Joint efforts with other schools mean that pupils get the benefits of visits from theatre groups, artists, authors and other outsiders, so further broadening the experience of pupils in a small village school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Safety has a high priority and the school has robust child-protection procedures in place. There are also appropriate procedures which help the school sustain above average attendance. Pupils are comfortable about approaching adults for help. Whitstone is an inclusive school, with good provision for the academic and personal needs of all pupils, including the most vulnerable and the most able. There are excellent procedures in place to ensure that pupils make a good transition when joining the school or moving on to the next phase of education. The school has developed good tracking procedures which enable it to assess pupils' progress and put appropriate support in place for individual pupils. However, the resulting targets, whilst reviewed regularly, are not used consistently to raise pupils' achievement to an even higher level in the classroom.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Governors support the school well, knowing its strengths and areas for development and constructively holding the school to account. Given the fact that there are no other full-time

teaching staff in the school, the headteacher does most of the monitoring of performance himself. He does this well so that the school's self-evaluation is accurate. An important feature of the monitoring is the weekly interview sessions the headteacher holds with groups of pupils. He is also careful to reduce the school's isolation by making excellent use of various outside links: for example using other local schools for joint projects, using the specialist expertise of a secondary school to improve sports provision, and encouraging strong parental involvement in the school. Strategic planning is appropriate and shows a good understanding of how the school should and can develop further. The school contributes well to community cohesion; apart from having a high profile in the small local community, the school is developing links with schools in several countries.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

25 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitstone Community Primary School, Oak Lane, Whitstone, Holsworthy, Devon EX22 6TH

Thank you for welcoming us so politely into your school, telling us about your school and letting us see you at work in lessons and at play outside.

Your school gives you a good education, so that almost all of you make good progress and often do better than pupils in many other schools. There are several reasons for this: your teachers teach you well, you told us that you enjoy school, you work well together in lessons, and most of you attend school regularly.

You told us that you feel safe in school, and your parents agree that the school looks after you very well. We also know that you are very keen on the visits, for example to Exeter, and you like the local projects such as the 'river' exercise.

Your headteacher leads the school very well, and he works very hard like the rest of the staff to give you many opportunities. Your school cooperates well with other schools so that visitors can come and perform for you, for example in drama, whilst they also help you with French and sport.

Although all of you do well, including those of you who find learning easy and those who find it more difficult, we have asked the school to improve three things. One is for teachers to give you more information when they mark your work and to use your targets so that you have a better understanding of exactly how you can improve your work still further. We have also asked that children in the Reception class be allowed time to choose what they would like to do outside and indoors. The other thing is for teachers to give you more opportunities to write in different subjects, because writing is one area where some of you do less well than in other subjects. You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard.

Once again, thank you for your welcome and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Laver Lead inspector