

Whimble Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113113
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311111
Inspection date	4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Scanlon
Headteacher	S J Langley
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2003
School address	Whimble Exeter EX5 2TS
Telephone number	01404 822584
Fax number	01404 822584

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school, which serves the village of Whimple and the surrounding area, is smaller than many other primary schools. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds. No pupils learn English as an additional language. A very small number of pupils are from Gypsy/Roma families. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. The headteacher had been in post for four weeks prior to the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Although it has strengths, the school gives pupils a satisfactory education at present. Many parents hold the school in high regard, as reflected in comments such as: 'A caring, happy environment! The children want to take care of each other– the ethos is one of mutual respect'. They rightly recognise its strengths as a community, and regard recent changes as a positive opportunity for the school.

Overall effectiveness is satisfactory because, although standards are generally above average, pupils' achievement is not as consistent as it should be, particularly for the older pupils. Pupils achieve well in Reception and in Years 1 and 2 because of the effective working partnership between the teachers, their high expectations and their very good knowledge of the children. Standards by the end of Year 2 have improved steadily in recent years. For the older pupils, achievement is satisfactory, with some inconsistencies in performance. The lack, until recently, of a robust tracking system has made it difficult to monitor individual progress in sufficient detail and not all of the older pupils have been making the progress of which they are capable. There is insufficient pace, challenge and stimulation in some of the teaching and pupils' enthusiasm is not always built upon effectively. There is not enough focus on the needs of able and gifted pupils. At the end of Year 6 in the last two years, particularly high standards in science have concealed less robust performance in writing (reading is a strength across the school) and in mathematics where there has been a steady decline. Mathematics therefore remains a priority for development. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily. The very few Gypsy/Roma pupils attend regularly and with effective support from the school are making good progress.

The new headteacher has already made her mark. Her evaluation is incisive. She has accurately assessed what is needed to move the school on and has already initiated changes, such as a whole-school system for tracking pupils' progress. Staff responsibilities have been reviewed, with a clear monitoring schedule implemented. Many parents comment favourably on the improved communication. As it will take time for some improvements to have full impact, leadership and management are judged satisfactory at present. However, the capacity for further improvement is good.

The curriculum is satisfactory, although extra-curricular and enrichment elements are good. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall, while pastoral aspects are good, academic guidance is not better than satisfactory. This is because the use of individual targets is relatively new and inconsistently implemented across the school. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Behaviour is a strength, while the school's support for healthy lifestyles is outstanding. Pupils achieve high levels of attendance.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is led well. A key strength is the close partnership with the local pre-school, which ensures that children are well prepared on entry to Reception. Effective teaching ensures that children enjoy school and make good progress in the six areas of learning. By the end of the summer term in 2007, standards were above those expected nationally with all children achieving or exceeding the expected learning goals. Progress is particularly marked in personal and social development, communication and language and in physical development.

Progress in mathematical development was relatively slower in the last year. In the autumn term, the few Reception children work alongside Year 1 pupils. Careful planning and effective use of support staff ensure that they receive good levels of attention. The curriculum is broad with good opportunities for free play. The school is currently reviewing children's ease of access to outdoor facilities. Some areas of the curriculum, particularly the outdoor classroom, would benefit from more stimulating additional resources.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 to ensure that pupils' achievement is more consistent.
- Reverse the decline in standards in mathematics, particularly for the older pupils.
- Make more effective use of individual targets to boost pupils' achievement.

A small proportion of 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. Attainment on entry to Reception is around the expected level. Children make good progress in Reception so that, on entry to Year 1, standards exceed those expected. This brisk start is sustained in Years 1 and 2 because of good teaching and teachers' close knowledge of the pupils. Standards by the end of Year 2 have improved steadily and in the last two years have been above average, with particularly high performance in reading. Although broadly average in 2007, standards at Year 6 have been significantly above average in four of the last five years. Recently, high standards in science have masked performance in English and mathematics, which was closer to the average and there has been a gradual decline in standards in mathematics. Older pupils are achieving at a less consistent rate overall than younger pupils, mainly because the teaching is not always sufficiently challenging. The lack, until recently, of a tracking system has made it difficult to monitor individual progress. The potential of able pupils is not always fully realised. While the targets for Year 6 in 2007 in English and mathematics were achieved, such targets should be still more challenging.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, because their needs are identified accurately and they receive effective support. The few Gypsy/Roma pupils have made good progress because they attend consistently and are supported well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. Good attendance reflects pupils' positive attitudes. Behaviour is consistently good. Relationships are a significant strength. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because of the many opportunities planned within the curriculum. Pupils work together well. They learn how important it is to stay safe, be healthy and make a positive contribution to society. Pupils show a strong sense of community in their efforts to raise money for local and national charities. There is great pride in the local community and pupils are keen to sustain village life and the local heritage. They support others through the increasingly effective school council and buddy system. Members of the school council have the opportunity to manage the annual council budget. Pupils feel safe and say there is

no bullying. Younger pupils in particular enjoy school. Older pupils, however, are less inspired by the teaching and are less actively engaged by lessons. The school's commitment to healthy lifestyles is outstanding. Its promotion of the 'walking bus' initiative has attracted national interest. Many pupils take part in physical activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In the Foundation Stage, staff have a clear view of what children need to achieve. As a result, teaching is consistently good, leading to good progress. This is sustained well through Years 1 and 2 because of the way staff share teaching responsibilities, so that each has a clear overview of pupils' progress. Planning is sharply focused on individual needs and support staff are effectively deployed.

The absence of whole-school tracking and target setting has impacted to a greater extent on Years 3 to 6 where there have been more inconsistencies in pupils' progress. As elsewhere, relationships are good, behaviour is managed effectively and teachers have good subject knowledge. However, planning does not always provide sufficient challenge for the range of abilities, in particular for the more able pupils, and the pace of lessons is sometimes slow. The headteacher recognises the need for individual targets in numeracy, with a view to arresting declining standards.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well by effective teaching assistants and make at least satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has generally made effective use of restricted working space to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. This is enriched by regular visits to places of interest and events. Pupils value opportunities to contribute to the local community. The school is beginning to redefine the links between subjects and to review and improve provision for gifted and talented pupils. There is a good provision to support pupils' personal, social and health education. The enhanced provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has had a significant effect on pupils' learning. However, working space for design and technology activities is insufficient. Provision for physical activity has improved. However, the potential benefits of the off-site facilities are constrained by a lack of changing and toilet facilities. This limits access by younger pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good. Adults promote pupils' health and safety successfully. Supervision is effective and pupils feel confident that there is always an adult to support them. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good. The school has good links with external agencies, so ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively supported. Within individual classes, pupils' progress is tracked satisfactorily, although this is more effective in literacy than in mathematics. Academic guidance is broadly satisfactory. Older pupils have targets for improvement in literacy and generally know what they are, although this is a recent

development. Pupils generally receive clear information through marking on how to improve. At present, targets have less impact on pupils' progress than they might.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher provides good leadership. She is closely focused on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. Her evaluation of the school's needs is good. She has accurately assessed where change is needed. Staff have responded positively to new leadership and appreciate the clear direction and support. Many parents recognise the much-improved communication. Some changes, such as the implementation of a pupil tracking system, have already been made. There has, however, been insufficient time for such actions to have had a significant impact. The roles of senior staff and subject leaders have been redefined and a well-structured monitoring programme established. The school shows good capacity for improvement. Governance is satisfactory. Governors fulfil their legal responsibilities well and work in effective partnership with the school. They now feel more empowered and recognise their responsibility to challenge, as well as support, the school's leadership. The support for pupils from Gypsy/Roma backgrounds is effectively managed.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	3

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	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

6 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whimble Primary School, Exeter, EX5 2TS

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. Many of you were interested in what we were doing and were keen to talk to us. We appreciated the discussions we had with you and were impressed by your politeness and your enthusiasm for school. We found that Whimble Primary is a satisfactory school.

These are the things we most liked about your school.

- You are well behaved, work hard and your attendance is particularly good. Your teachers look after you well and mostly give you satisfactory guidance about how you can improve your work.
- The teaching is satisfactory, sometimes better. Most of you make steady progress in lessons and do as well as most other pupils of your age.
- The curriculum is satisfactorily organised and you support activities and clubs well.
- You are very impressed by the new headteacher who has a really clear view of what the school needs to do to improve. At present, the school is managed satisfactorily but it has the capacity to make brisk progress.

We have asked the staff to make some changes so that the school becomes more effective.

- Make sure that the teaching in Years 3 to 6 is really challenging and interesting so that the pace of learning is good across the school.
- Help you to raise the standard of your work in mathematics.
- Support your progress by making more use of the system of individual targets which is already partly in place.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We wish you all success in the future.

Yours faithfully

George Logan Lead inspector

Annex B



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