

The White Bridge Community Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114872
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311735
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Missin

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	168
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	Mrs Catherine Keel
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Witteridge
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Greensted Road Loughton Essex IG10 3DR
Telephone number	0208 5088624
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This infant school is smaller than most other similar schools. The number on roll is stable. Attainment on admission is below that expected for the children's age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average but a below average number of pupils have statements of educational need. A well below average proportion is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has been increasing year on year, and is now broadly the same as most other schools. There are currently eight pupils who are at an early stage of learning English.

The school has recently gained an Active Mark Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Parents overwhelmingly support the inspectors' view that the White Bridge Infant school is a good school. One said, 'The headteacher and teaching staff are excellent. They make our children's learning an enjoyable and rewarding experience', and another, 'All staff are kind, firm and very approachable and pupils develop well both socially and educationally'. Inspectors agree that these are important strengths of the school. Pupils are well cared for and their welfare is a high priority. There are good systems for identifying individual need and vulnerable pupils are managed sensitively and effectively. Pupils develop excellent personal skills. They have a very strong appreciation of the school and wider community as they raise money for local charities and some serve as school councillors. Their behaviour in class and around the school is outstanding. They show very high levels of enjoyment and commitment to their work. Attendance has been above average for the past few years but was closer to average last year. Nevertheless, the school works hard to secure regular attendance and punctuality. Pupils know how to stay healthy and safe, and their strong social skills and good basic literacy and numeracy skills equip them well for the next stage of their education and beyond.

There is a clear drive to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress in their learning. In recent years, standards at the end of Year 2 have been mostly above average, but well above average in reading. This is the result of the emphasis which the school puts on the development of reading skills. As well as learning effective skills, pupils soon become confident, independent readers with a love of books and stories. Standards in mathematics are now above average as a result of the recent focus on encouraging mathematical skills. However, standards in writing remain lower than those in other subjects, especially for boys, and the strategies to encourage the wider application of writing skills across different subjects are not sufficiently detailed. Achievement across the school is good. Pupils make good gains in knowledge and understanding as they move through the school.

Good teaching encourages and develops pupils' attitudes and has established very high expectations and excellent behaviour. Pupils respond very well to all adults in class and around the school, and are keen to do their best and willingly try new things. Teachers are enthusiastic and well prepared, and they plan carefully for the ability of all pupils in their class. Lessons are taught at a brisk pace and often involve practical activities which interest pupils and add to the enjoyment of their work. The curriculum is appropriately focused on the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills and the teaching of reading is done very well indeed.

The headteacher leads the school well. She is well supported by other senior staff. The school improvement plan is focused clearly on the drive to raise standards and it is at the centre of the school's work. However, the priority to revise the current curriculum and to introduce a more topic based approach is not sufficiently clear in the school improvement plan. Self-evaluation procedures are secure and governors support and challenge the school well. These strengths mean that the school has good capacity for its future development.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with the knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy, and social development. Most make good progress in their learning to reach the standards expected for their age by the end of the

Foundation Stage, although early writing skills are less well developed. Children make good progress because teaching is good and the curriculum is interesting and well planned. Another strength is the way in which children's personal and social skills are developed. Children's behaviour is excellent. They play well on their own and with others, and any disagreements are dealt with by staff kindly and firmly. Children make effective choices but are not always able to explain clearly what it is they are trying to achieve. They take responsibility for small tasks, such as clearing away at the end of the day. They show interest and enthusiasm, separate willingly from parents and come into school happily. Health, safety and safeguarding arrangements are robust and as a result, children feel safe and have a good idea of what it is to be healthy. The provision is well led and managed. The leader has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas that require improvement in writing and social development. The outdoor area has been a particular focus and the school is now rightly proud of the provision. There is good integration between inside and outside activities, and the leader is monitoring the use of the outdoor area in order to evaluate its effectiveness.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for boys, and ensure that strategies to develop skills across different subject areas are made clearer.
- Ensure that the priority to introduce a more flexible, creative curriculum is more clearly set out in the school improvement plan.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall standards in Year 2 have been above average each year recently, although they were closer to average in 2007. Standards in reading have remained above and sometimes well above average for some time. This is because the focus on developing reading skills is relentlessly pursued. Indications for 2008 are that the high standards were being maintained in reading and those in mathematics have improved to above average levels. However, standards in writing are average, but remain lower than those of other subjects, especially in relation to boys' achievement. The school sets challenging individual targets which are based on pupils' previous learning. Across the school, pupils of all abilities, including those with English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well and make good progress in their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is promoted very effectively. Pupils have an excellent understanding of what it means to be healthy, and they play robustly and safely in the playground. An effective school council has instigated the provision of new playground equipment and designed wonderful alien drawings for the playground floor. Relationships and pupils' behaviour in class and around the school are excellent. They say that any issues that might arise are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils learn about other cultures and the school celebrates special days such as Diwali and Chinese New Year. Effective reference was made to the importance of Eid during a school assembly during the inspection. Pupils respond well to the community beyond the school and family, as they are involved in a range of charities such as Red Nose Day, Jeans for Genes and 'Goats, Cows and School Dinners' organised by Oxfam for children in Africa. Pupils and parents confirm how much they enjoy school. The

school has worked very hard to improve attendance since the last inspection. It has been above and well above the national average in recent years, but closer to average last year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers encourage and motivate pupils well. They are enthusiastic and have realistically high expectations of how pupils are expected to behave and the work which they can do. They value pupils' contributions and manage them with skill and sensitivity. This secures pupils' excellent behaviour and establishes the very positive attitudes and relationships in class. Clear lesson planning is helping teachers and their teaching assistants ensure that pupils of all abilities are making good progress in their learning and that activities are well matched to pupils' abilities. Lessons often include practical activities which interest and challenge the pupils and are fun to take part in. Interactive whiteboards are used well to capture and keep children's interest. Pupils who need extra help get good support and achieve their targets. Teachers are using assessment well both during lessons and in the summing up at the end to support pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides an effective focus on the provision of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Strengths are the way in which practical, 'hands-on' learning is encouraged and the very effective promotion of reading skills. The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development very well indeed, but planning for the development of writing skills across different subjects is not yet fully established. Pupils know how to stay safe and be healthy. The curriculum is carefully and sensitively modified for pupils who may be vulnerable or in need. A good number of interesting visits and visitors to the school also help to make learning fun for the pupils. There are good links with the local community through visits to the shops, the church and local librarians regularly visit the school.

The good range of after-school clubs, which are provided by commercial organisations, offer additional opportunities for pupils in areas such as science, sports, French and dance. The school staff provide a recorder club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Several parents indicated their confidence in the school's care and welfare systems. Safeguarding is robust and secure. The school is continuing to work hard to encourage good attendance and punctuality. There are effective procedures for identifying pupils' individual needs and for managing those who may be vulnerable or distressed. Pupils with specific learning needs have clear short term learning plans and they are given good levels of encouragement and support in meeting them by teachers and several very effective assistants. Teachers have developed effective systems to encourage pupils to make their own assessments of how well they are doing. Procedures for assessing and tracking what pupils know and can do are robust. Pupils are set helpful learning targets which show them how to improve and which impact well on the good progress they make.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development, which she shares effectively with staff and governors. All staff work closely together as valued members of the whole staff team. Management systems are clear and well understood and, as a result, the school runs smoothly. School leaders at all levels have a positive impact on the school's work and some less experienced leaders are making effective beginnings to their responsibilities. Self-evaluation procedures are robust and accurate. School improvement planning is focused clearly on the priority of raising standards in writing and mathematics and continuing to ensure high standards in reading. However, the planning for proposed changes to the curriculum is less clear. The school made an effective response to the drop in mathematics results in the 2007 national assessment tests. Parents are overwhelmingly confident in the headteacher's leadership and they are involved well in their children's learning. A good number regularly attend school meetings. Governors support and challenge the school well.

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?	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 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?	1
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	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 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**

8 October 2008

Dear Children,

The White Bridge Community Infant School, Loughton, Essex, IG10 3DR

I am writing to let you know how much my colleague and I enjoyed our visit to your school recently. Thank you for making us feel so welcome.

Here are the things that we think are best about your school:

- You work and play very well together, and your behaviour in class and around the school is excellent.
- You achieve well in lots of different ways. The standard of your reading and the way that you are developing a love of books are very impressive indeed.
- You and many of your parents agree that you are well looked after and that you really enjoy all that the school provides.
- Your teachers are good at providing work for you that is interesting and challenging.
- Your headteacher and all the staff understand how to continue to make the school even better.

These are the things that we think could be better:

- Teachers need to plan more opportunities for you to develop your writing skills across different subjects.
- The school's plans to organise your work through a wider topic approach are not detailed enough.

We wish you well for the future.

Paul Missin

Lead inspector