

White Court Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114988
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311779
Inspection date	9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth Frith

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	621
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Reilly
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Spittlehouse
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2005
School address	Ennerdale Avenue Braintree Essex CM77 7UE
Telephone number	01376 331801
Fax number	01376 330060

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the level of challenge for the more capable pupils, the effectiveness of academic guidance and the quality of leadership and management. She gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation form, lesson observations, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, samples of pupils' work, information that the school keeps on how well pupils are doing, the school development plan and an analysis of the parents' questionnaire responses. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in as much detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a very large primary school. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and the percentage receiving free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with additional learning needs is below average. The number with a statement of special educational need is low. Pupils enter school with most skills similar to those usually seen in children of that age but aspects of writing and mathematical development are below expectations. An average percentage of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic groups. Very few speak English as an additional language.

The school has received the National Healthy Schools Award, the Eco School Bronze Award and Investors in People accreditation in recognition of its work.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and do well. Excellent leadership and management by the headteacher and very effective support from the senior leadership team focus clearly on promoting pupils' well-being and raising standards. This results in good teaching and a stimulating curriculum, which lead to pupils' excellent personal development and good achievement. Most parents are positive about the school, as the following typical comment indicates. 'Both my children are happy and content and I am thrilled with their educational and social achievements.' Pupils also like school because 'You are taught lots of fun things - it's not boring' and 'teachers and children are friendly'.

Pupils achieve well because lessons build systematically on previous learning and they respond very well to the challenges set. High expectations and good subject knowledge are successfully used to plan lessons that maintain pupils' interests. Frequently there is a buzz of excitement and activity in lessons as pupils settle to their tasks. Work matches the pupils' abilities well and they are clearly told what they are expected to learn and do in each lesson. Consequently, they feel confident to tackle new work and succeed. Recent improvements to challenge pupils that are more capable, together with the grouping of pupils of similar ability for some lessons, help to ensure that they also achieve well. Staff use questioning very effectively to develop pupils' thinking and help them to make connections between different aspects of their work.

In the Foundation Stage, children's development and learning are good so that by the time they enter Year 1, most are working at the level expected for their age across all areas. A few are a little behind with their communication skills and writing. In Key Stage 1, teachers continue to build on this good start and pupils achieve particularly well in reading where standards are above average. They are well prepared for Key Stage 2 where good progress is maintained so that by the time pupils leave school, standards are above average in English and mathematics. Standards are only slightly above average in science because pupils have had limited opportunity to develop their skills and scientific thinking through carrying out investigations. Evidence provided by the school, work in lessons and in pupils' books shows that all groups are progressing well. Although pupils' academic guidance is good in some lessons, the marking of their work and the setting of clear targets for improvement are not effective enough to promote learning at the best possible rate.

Overall, care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care is particularly strong because within this very large school, clear and effective management structures ensure that pupils' individual needs are met well. Teaching assistants play an important role in the learning of all pupils but particularly for those who need extra support with their reading, writing and mathematics. Systems for safeguarding pupils are robust and staff work well with a range of outside agencies to ensure vulnerable pupils receive the support they need.

A major feature of the good curriculum is the way in which it engenders excitement and enjoyment in learning. This is reflected in the above average attendance. The school environment is very stimulating with a good range of resources and exciting displays that celebrate pupils' achievements well. A good range of visits, visitors, theme weeks and clubs help to widen pupils' interests, develop new skills and provide them with more 'hands-on' experiences. Good links exist with a local secondary school where staff have helped to support the teaching of French for many years.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. There is an extremely positive atmosphere throughout the school with a focus on developing pupils' self-esteem and awareness of the effects of their actions on others. Pupils respond very well and their excellent behaviour helps to create a harmonious community. Pupils readily make friends and they work together very well. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community through showing respect and consideration for others, working on the pupil task force (school council) and the pupil design team and improving the school building and grounds. Pupils' views are sought and their ideas acted upon, for example, when changing the lunch menus. Pupils have an exceptionally good understanding of how to live healthy lives and this positively affects what they eat and the range of physical activities in which they take part. Pupils' personal and social skills, together with their good achievement, prepare them well for the next stage of their education and beyond.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher and senior staff give a very clear lead to colleagues who, in turn, work as an effective team with a shared sense of purpose. Some subject leaders fulfil all aspects of their roles well, but others are still developing their use of data, monitoring and evaluation in order to improve standards. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and this helps them to ask questions about its effectiveness. There are good systems for checking how well the school is doing and identifying what it could do better. These reflect the school's consistent push for improvement. Together with the senior management team, governors have been instrumental in the good improvement since the last inspection and the school's capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Staff have a good understanding of how young children learn and use this effectively to plan a good range of interesting activities across all areas of learning both in class and outside. Because the activities are interesting, children are motivated to learn, maintain good levels of concentration and behave very well. Their independent skills develop well because lessons are well organised and they are encouraged to follow their interests and choose activities. There are also good opportunities for them to work under the close direction of an adult to develop specific skills. Leadership and management are good and reflected in the high expectations of staff.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills in science so that by the end of Key Stage 2 overall standards match those in English and mathematics.
- Improve the way pupils' work is marked and targets set so that pupils have a clearer understanding of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.

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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?	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 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 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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well 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 the 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

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?	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

10 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of White Court Primary School, Great Notley, Braintree, CM77 7UE

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I recently visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and finding out about your work and what you do. You and your parents think that White Court is a good school and I agree with you. If you read on you will see some of the things I found out.

- You work hard and make good progress so that by the time you leave school you reach standards above those often seen in children of that age.
- You thoroughly enjoy school because the work is interesting.
- Most pupils like using computers and think that the teachers' use of the interactive whiteboards makes it easier for you to learn because it keeps your attention.
- You behave exceptionally well, get on with each other and make good friends. You know that bullying is wrong and I was pleased to hear that you would go to a member of staff if you had any problems.
- I think you have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives by eating a balanced diet and keeping fit through playing games and taking part in sport. Congratulations to the football team for winning the championship.
- Teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants work well with others to ensure that you receive the support you need, particularly those of you who find learning difficult.

Mrs Spittlehouse, staff and governors are all helping to improve the school. They are keen to make it even better and have agreed to focus on two things. They will make sure you have more opportunities to develop your skills of investigation in science so that you reach higher standards. I am sure you will enjoy this. Also, teachers are going to further improve the way they mark your work and set targets so that you have a clearer understanding of what you have done well and how you can do even better. You could help by making sure you respond to their comments and by working hard to meet your targets.

I left your school confident that it will continue to improve and wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith

Lead inspector