

Whittington CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116856
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	312426
Inspection dates	21–22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin James

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Newell
Headteacher	Gary Richards
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Whittington Worcester WR5 2QZ
Telephone number	01905 354844
Fax number	01905 354844

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is similar in size to most primary schools. Nearly all pupils are from a White British background. There are no pupils currently eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need. In recognition of its work, the school has received Healthy Schools and Eco Schools Silver Award accreditation.

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 achieve well. Pupils really enjoy school, as shown by their good attitudes and behaviour. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, for example, pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils are well cared for, with their safety being a priority of the school. However, guidance provided through marking and target setting does not always help them understand clearly how to improve their work. Parents are very positive about the school, and many commented on how much they valued the quality of the learning environment provided for their children. One said typically, 'My daughter loves school, and cannot wait to attend each day.'

When children start in Reception their knowledge and skills are broadly as expected. During their time in Reception children achieve well, reaching and sometimes exceeding the goals set for them. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 1 to 6. Standards are usually above average by the end of Year 6, although, exceptionally, they were lower last year.

Relationships are an outstanding feature of the good teaching, with teaching assistants being used well and teachers making good use of a variety of strategies to make lessons interesting. Lessons are thoroughly planned, with careful allowance made, for example, for the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Allowance is also made for more able pupils. However, on occasions this work is not challenging enough to suit their particular needs.

The good curriculum contributes well to both pupils' enjoyment of school and their learning. It is interesting and varied, and in particular helps to make pupils very aware of the need to follow a healthy lifestyle. The school routinely reviews its curriculum, with a current emphasis being placed on increasing the use of literacy and numeracy in other subjects. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of visits and musical and sporting activities.

The headteacher and other senior members of staff are committed to doing the best they can for their pupils. As a result of good leadership and management, self-evaluation is effective in pinpointing where improvement is needed. This has contributed well to recent improvements, particularly in addressing weaknesses in pupils' work. Governors support the school well, and they are presently working to strengthen their monitoring role. Good use is made of outside bodies, such as sports coaches and special needs advisers, in supporting the work of the school. The improvements that have been made recently, the quality of provision currently being provided and the improvements since the previous inspection show that the school has a good capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle happily into school, and are provided with an appropriate balance of teacher-led activities and opportunities for them to choose for themselves. A good range of resources is provided in the classroom, and the outdoor area is used well. The children behave well, although a very small number sometimes find it difficult to maintain concentration on the tasks they have chosen. The staff create a friendly and caring learning environment, and the children enjoy school and develop good social skills. As a result of good teaching, children make good progress, attaining, and sometimes exceeding, the standards expected of them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers consistently provide challenge in the work given to pupils, especially those who are more able.
- Improve the quality of marking and target setting, so that pupils have a clearer understanding about how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and pupils' achievement is good. Children enter the school with standards that are broadly as expected. They make a good start in Reception, and by the end of the year they attain the targets set for them, with some children exceeding their targets. In Years 1 to 6 pupils continue to achieve well. In Year 6, pupils usually reach above average standards, although in 2007 they were broadly average. The school carefully identified weaknesses in the pupils' work, for example in understanding and undertaking problem solving activities in mathematics. As a result of actions taken to address these issues, standards in the current Year 6 are, as in previous years, above average, and the pupils have progressed well from their starting points. The school makes good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and as a result they make good progress towards the targets set for them. However, the school recognises that the progress made by more able pupils, although good overall, does not have the same consistency, and that on occasions it could be better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say that they like school very much, and this is reflected in their consistently above average attendance, their good behaviour and their evident enjoyment. They are polite and courteous, and they move around the school in a quiet and calm manner. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem, and they express complete confidence in the school's ability to sort out any issues that do arise. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, although their understanding of the multicultural society in which we live is less strong. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to live healthy lives, and they readily make healthy choices in what they eat. Pupils benefit from the good opportunities provided by the school for exercise, especially the daily 'Activate' sessions, which they tackle with great enthusiasm.

Pupils take the many responsibilities that they have in school very seriously. The school councillors are proud of their role, and one said, 'It's a VIP job.' In this he recognised that he was working on behalf of other pupils. Pupils are also involved in the wider community through such things as fund raising and taking part in musical activities in the local church. In their personal development and in their learning, pupils are acquiring the skills that will serve them well as they go through life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers display good subject knowledge. They typically provide interesting lessons, using a good range of resources and strategies and enabling pupils to make good progress. Lesson objectives are clear and provide pupils with a good focus for their learning. Classes are well

managed and relationships are a strength. As a result, pupils are well behaved, keen to learn and ready to work hard. Teaching assistants are well deployed to promote learning, especially that of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This ensures they are able to join in all class activities and make good progress. Teachers make good use of paired discussions to help pupils clarify their ideas and develop their understanding of the work.

Teachers plan thoroughly to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, and in much of the teaching these needs are met well, especially for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, although planning also takes account of the needs of more able pupils, it lacks consistency. On occasions the work provided for these pupils is not challenging enough, so that their knowledge and skills are not fully extended during the lesson. Assessment procedures successfully monitor pupils' progress, but they are not always used effectively to show pupils how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum enables pupils to study a broad and interesting range of subjects and topics. Good links are made between subjects, where appropriate, and this helps to make learning more meaningful for the pupils. Good use is also made of the local environment, in science work for example. The school recognises that opportunities for using literacy and numeracy skills in other subject and topic areas are limited, and is currently working to enhance their use. In the Foundation Stage, there is a good balance between independent learning and more directed tasks. Learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified well, and pupils are provided with a most suitable range of relevant work throughout the school. There is also a strong emphasis throughout the school on developing pupils' personal and social skills.

The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' safe and healthy lifestyles. There is also a good range of educational outings and extra-curricular activities, which the pupils support with enthusiasm. Music is a strong feature in the school, and many pupils learn musical instruments and join the school's music groups.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils are especially good in relation to pastoral care, and parents much appreciate this. Staff have established supportive and valued relationships with pupils, and this helps them to feel safe and secure. Staff are alert to signs that any pupils might be worried or anxious. Safeguarding procedures are firmly in place, risk assessments are routinely carried out, and attention is paid to the security of the school site, thus contributing to pupils' health and safety. Pupils are reminded about the need to carry out all activities safely. The school very actively promotes healthy lifestyles and physical activity.

Guidance and support in class are mostly effective, such as through the careful use of lesson objectives and success criteria during lessons. However, some of the targets provided for pupils are too broad, and do not always make clear to them what they need to do to improve their work. Similarly, whilst teachers regularly provide comments of praise and encouragement when marking pupils' books, they do not always give advice on how to make work better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school with dedication and skill, and he is supported most effectively by other senior leaders. There is a shared and clear sense of purpose to make the best possible provision for pupils, to help them achieve as well as they can and to develop the school further. In particular, all staff have been most successful in creating a caring environment, where the well-being of pupils is paramount and pupils are enabled to feel safe.

The school has good systems for finding out how well it is doing, and the self-review has accurately identified strengths and areas for development. For example, actions to raise standards in Year 6 to their former level have been successful, and the current focus on improving the consistency of marking and target setting is well chosen. Senior leaders also recognise that more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in their work.

Subject leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the strengths in their subjects, and have successfully supported strategies for making improvements. Governors support the school well, are regular visitors and fully involved, for example, in producing and monitoring the school development plan. Governors recognise that they have not always held the school adequately to account in relation to its overall performance regarding pupils' progress. They are currently working to strengthen their monitoring role in this area through a better understanding of pupil performance data. The school regularly obtains the views of both pupils and parents, and these are taken into account during policy reviews.

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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?	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	1
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?	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

23 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Whittington CofE Primary School, Whittington, Worcester, WR5 2QZ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed our visit and talking to you. My colleague especially enjoyed talking to the school council, and we both really enjoyed joining you in assembly. I am writing to tell you what we found out about the school, what we think is good, and what we think could be made better. Overall, you are in a good school, where you are doing well with your work. The headteacher and other staff know what they need to do to make the school even better.

These things are some of the strengths of the school.

- Teaching is good. Your teachers provide you with interesting lessons, and you get on very well with them.
- Your behaviour and your attitudes to your work are good.
- You really enjoy the good range of activities that the school provides, such as visits and different clubs.
- Your personal development is good. You know about how important it is to eat healthy food and take exercise, and you all take part most enthusiastically in the 'Activate' sessions each day.
- The staff know you well and take very great care of you.
- Your parents are very pleased with the school.

These are things the school has been asked to improve.

- Make sure that you all get work in lessons that suits you and is hard enough for you.
- Provide you with clearer targets and comments in marking, to make sure you understand how to improve your work.

You can help too, by making sure you know how to make your work even better.

We wish you all good luck for the future.

Best wishes

Martin James Lead inspector