

Whitchurch CofE Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123514
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	314620
Inspection date	29 April 2008
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Bates
Headteacher	Mathew Copping
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
School address	Salisbury Road Whitchurch SY13 1RX
Telephone number	01948 662255
Fax number	01948 666380

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

The achievement of pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the increasing number who do not speak English at home.

The levels of challenge in targets set for pupils' future progress and how effectively targets are being used to support this progress.

The effectiveness of links between subjects to enable pupils to practise their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in other subjects.

Evidence was gathered from:

discussions with leaders, governors, pupils, parents and staff

visits to all classes

scrutiny of pupils' work

observation of other aspects of the school day such as break and lunchtime

analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in 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

Whitchurch Junior School is larger than average and serves the town and surrounding rural areas. A higher proportion of pupils than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A small but increasing number of pupils do not speak English at home. The headteacher took up his post in September 2007.

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 are being given a good grounding for their future, both in terms of their academic development and to take their places as responsible members of society. Parents recognise the effectiveness of the school, saying such things as, 'Children are encouraged to meet their full potential and have been prepared very well for the next stage in their education.'

The pupils currently at the top of the school joined in Year 3 with below average standards. Pupils are making good progress through the school, achieving well and they reach average standards by the end of Year 6. These standards are improving, particularly in writing, which has been a focus for the school. Pupils are now making rapid progress in developing their writing skills. Part of the reason for this is that there is a good range of planned opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in other subjects, such as history and science. This shows good improvement since the previous inspection, where this was a weakness. The school is still working further to extend links, particularly so that pupils can use their mathematical skills more often. Progress in mathematics is not so good, but the school has analysed this as an area for development and is working on it.

There are two key reasons for pupils' good progress, and these are good teaching and an inspiring curriculum. Teachers know their pupils well and create a purposeful and calm working environment in their classes. They make particularly good use of interactive whiteboards and other technology to interest and engage pupils. Marking is usually helpful and gives pupils good guidance on how they can improve, but it is not always sufficiently linked to their targets for future improvement. There are occasions in lessons when opportunities are missed to allow pupils to discuss ideas with each other to extend their understanding.

The curriculum is planned well to interest and enthuse pupils of all abilities and this contributes well to pupils' good progress and ensures that they thoroughly enjoy school. Many said that they find lessons fun. The new literacy strategy has been adopted, although not the strategy for numeracy as the school wanted to focus on one subject at a time. Particularly good use is made of visits and visitors to enhance the curriculum and provide stimuli for topics to be studied. 'Our child finds school trips inspirational' was a typical comment from a parent. There is also a wide range of extra-curricular activities, many of which help to promote pupils' adoption of a healthy lifestyle. For instance, there is a good selection of sporting activities, some specifically for younger pupils. There is also a popular cookery club, where the focus is on healthy eating. School lunches also provide a range of healthy options. Despite this, pupils do not always make good choices, with packets of crisps and chocolate bars finding their way into school in lunch boxes or as break-time snacks.

One of the major strengths of the school is the high quality of pastoral care. Parents say their children are very well cared for and pupils spoke of feeling safe and secure. Safeguarding procedures and risk assessments are rigorous. Some parents expressed concerns about bullying, although pupils spoken to regard incidents as being minor and said they are dealt with very well by staff. Pupils behave well, play sensibly and are extremely well aware of how to stay safe, both in school and in the locality. Particularly good support is provided for the small number of pupils who do not speak English at home. Their progress is monitored carefully and a member of staff who speaks the home language of many of them has been appointed. The

progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also monitored effectively and they are given good support to make the same progress as their classmates.

Academic support and guidance is at an early stage of development. Whereas a good start has been made at checking on the levels at which pupils are working, this is only done annually, except in writing. This means that teachers cannot be entirely sure that pupils are not beginning to slip behind their expected rate of progress. The monitoring of pupils' writing is much more regular and is one of the reasons for their better progress in this subject. Good challenging targets are set for pupils' performance by the end of Year 6 and these are beginning to be developed to set annual progress targets. Although pupils are given guidance on what they are expected to be learning, these short-term targets are insufficiently precise and do not always meet individuals' learning needs.

Pupils are listened to well and their opinion is valued. For example, members of the school council have recently canvassed their classes and had a significant input into the teaching and learning policy, coming up with very sensible ideas for the components of a good lesson. They also raise considerable sums each year for charities and their cultural development is enhanced through some of these funds going to support a child in Uganda. Their involvement in the local community is not so effective, although pupils have many opportunities to play in local sporting tournaments. There are strong links with local schools, and pupils benefit from some specialist work with the local high school in design and technology, for example. Pupils' good development of basic skills, particularly their competence in ICT, prepares them well for their future.

The new headteacher has quickly made his mark and has built successfully on developments already in place. For example, he has continued the work to improve pupils' writing and establish links between subjects. Ably assisted by the senior leadership team, he has injected a fresh impetus to the school, which is recognised by many parents. Although an accurate picture has been built of the school's strengths and areas for development, the process of building this picture has not been spread sufficiently widely. For example, governors are knowledgeable and supportive and offer good levels of challenge, but their monitoring, although developing, is not sufficiently rigorous. Given the progress that the school is making and the evident determination to maintain this process, the school is well placed to continue on the upward path.

What the school should do to improve further

- Check on pupils' levels of knowledge and understanding more regularly so that teachers can monitor pupils' progress more effectively and ensure that none is in danger of falling behind.
- Set clear targets for pupils so that they know exactly what they need to learn next and that teachers can then mark to these targets.

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

Achievement and standards

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

30 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitchurch Church of England Junior School, Whitchurch, SY13 1RX

Thank you so much for your very warm welcome when I visited recently. I very much enjoyed chatting with you and seeing your work and am particularly grateful to the school council for their time. Many of you told me how much you enjoy school and I am not surprised as it is a good school.

These are the best things that I found on my visit.

- You are making good progress, particularly in writing, because you are being taught well.
- Many of you told me how much you enjoy lessons, because they are planned to provide interesting things for you to do. You also enjoy the visits very much when you go to places to prepare for a topic.
- There is a really good range of other activities for you at lunchtimes and after school.
- All adults look after you extremely well and you told me that you feel safe and secure.
- You are developing well into responsible and sensible young people. In particular, you are extremely well aware of how to stay safe.
- Your headteacher and all staff and governors have good plans to make the school even better.

I have suggested that your headteacher and teachers might improve the following things.

- Check how well you are doing more regularly so that none of you are in danger of slipping behind.
- Improve the targets that are set for you so that each of you knows exactly what to do to take that next step in learning.

I know you will continue to work hard and do your best to help the staff make the school even better.

With best wishes

John D Eadie Lead inspector