

Whitchurch CofE Infant School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	123515
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	314621
Inspection date	6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	317
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	136
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Headdon
Headteacher	Greg Smallbone
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Station Road Whitchurch SY13 1RJ
Telephone number	01948 662905
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Age group	3-7
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, particularly for children currently in the school, the impact of pastoral care on children's personal development and well-being, and how well leaders and managers check and improve teaching and learning.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, its assessment records, the sampling of lessons, of children's work and teachers' planning, discussions with the headteacher, key staff and children, and analysis of the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The recent increase in the number of children attending this large infant school means that over half of the school's population falls within its EYFS provision. There are currently 136 children in Nursery, and the first intake of the year, consisting of 29 children, are in Reception. The other two thirds will start in January 2009. Nursery and Reception children are taught in separate age groups. Children in Years 1 and 2 are taught in six mixed-age classes. Children start school with skills and experiences well below those expected for their age. Their communication, language and literacy skills are particularly weak at this point.

The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average but this varies from year to year. The number of children from minority ethnic groups and/or at the early stages of learning English has also increased recently, bringing the proportion in these two groups up to the national average. The school has achieved the Golden Healthy Schools award and the Activemark.

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. Comments such as 'I have every faith in this school', 'every year it improves', 'it is very supportive and approachable' and 'it treats children as individuals' are typical of the many very positive comments that came from parents. The school is a hive of activity where children greatly enjoy learning and usually try their best to succeed. The quality of care the school provides for children and their parents is excellent. Parents and children often learn alongside each other and both benefit from doing so. The extended school's 'Family Learning' work contributes greatly to this, as do the school's excellent links with parents and external agencies, including access to health professionals and on-site speech therapy. All safeguarding procedures are in place, ensuring that children work and play in a safe, secure learning environment.

Children achieve well. The school's good records of their progress and evidence from their work show this. Standards are broadly average in the current Year 2 class. They were below average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2008, and lower than in previous years. This was because there was a well above average proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in that year group. Despite this, they made good progress from their starting points, and did better in writing than in reading or mathematics. This shows the impact of the school's work to improve writing. The good provision in EYFS, and the focus on phonics there, are key factors in the recent improvements in reading in Year 1.

Children have many opportunities to write in different subjects, for example, science and history. However, they do not always remember what they have learned in literacy when they do so, and teachers' marking does not remind them. Marking is good in literacy. It praises what children do well and gives them pointers for improvement. However, children do not see these pointers as the next steps in their learning. This minimises the impact the comments might have on helping them to see how they can improve their own work. There are few such comments in work other than literacy.

Children quote mathematics and science as their favourite subjects and say they like finding things out for themselves. Their understanding of how to predict, record and evaluate investigations in science, and to ensure that tests are fair, is well developed for their age. This well-focused practical work is spreading to literacy, too, for example through the 'Forest Schools' work, providing exciting opportunities for reading and writing. This aspect of good teaching is stimulating children's curiosity and increasing their willingness to learn. The good quality artwork around the school, which includes paintings and multimedia work in the style of famous artists, tissue sculptures and textiles, is further evidence of the children's love of practical activities. All of this is encapsulated in the well-planned curriculum in which clear links are made between literacy and other subjects.

The school has strengthened the links between information and communication technology and other subjects, too. Children were observed making good use of the mini computer suites now available in every classroom to enhance their learning. The curriculum supports teachers well in their planning. Teachers are mindful of the different ages and stages of learning in each class. They allow children to work in ability rather than age-related activities, thereby supporting the least to the most able, including through the effective use of their well-briefed teaching assistants. The joint planning that takes place ensures that all children have similar learning experiences and staff have the opportunity to learn from each other. The strong teamwork that

arises from this, together with the clear direction that senior managers provide, and the recent improvements in the curriculum and in children's learning, all give the school good capacity for further improvement.

The checks made on teaching and learning are very focused and areas for development are followed up rigorously. Governors keep a close check on the school's work, visiting classrooms, receiving reports and working with the school to help it improve. The school's evaluation of its own work is accurate and the school improvement plan sets a clear agenda for raising standards.

The good leadership and management of the headteacher and senior leaders resulted in the recent expansion of the management team, which has been handled well to develop the new post holders into their roles. They have also handled well the recent increase in the number of children for whom English is an additional language, making good use of adults who speak the languages to support the children's learning. Provision for this group of children is good, as is the provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's good links with other schools and organisations, which includes joint moderation of the Year 2 assessments with the junior school, paves the way for the children to continue to do well in the future.

The curriculum promotes children's personal, social and health education well. As a result, children have an excellent understanding of the principles of healthy living. They praise the school for its healthy meals, understand the importance of regular exercise, and readily discuss how packed lunches might be improved to support healthy eating better. They feel safe and secure in school, trust the staff fully and were puzzled at the thought of any bullying, because they felt it did not, and would not, be allowed to happen. Children make a good contribution to the school and local community. However, their understanding of different cultures beyond the local community and in the wider world is limited. The school has begun to look at ways of promoting these aspects of community cohesion more effectively, for example, through trying to develop links with schools in different parts of the world.

Children relish the opportunity to take responsibility, for example as school councillors, and they take their roles seriously. They grow their own vegetables and are currently investigating ways to save electricity, an initiative they took on after discussing how to be more environmentally friendly. Children behave well. They are open and friendly, polite and respectful, have a good understanding of right and wrong, and they support and care for each other. They leave the school well prepared for their future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good induction procedures, good relationships with parents, and the excellent attention paid to health, welfare and safety ensure children settle quickly into the well-established routines of this age group. They achieve well from their starting points. In 2008, they reached average standards except in communication, language and literacy. The school's work to improve children's communication skills is proving successful. Personal, social and emotional development is given high priority in the well-planned curriculum, which provides a good basis for teaching, and meets children's individual needs well. Children form good relationships with staff and with each other, and they work and play together well. The good range of exciting activities planned for them successfully builds their independence and encourages them to explore and learn by themselves as well as with adults. The children enjoy this very much. Staff carefully assess and record their progress and adapt activities to suit the children's different rates of learning.

The EYFS is well led and managed. Good teamwork, the staff's good knowledge of each individual and their strong commitment to providing the best for them, results in the curriculum being adjusted as and when necessary to move learning on. This flexibility is one of the key features of the good provision in this age group. Despite all of this, the school does not provide enough opportunities for outdoor learning. It acknowledges this and is currently looking at ways of improving outdoor provision across all six areas of learning in the EYFS and also in Years 1 and 2.

What the school should do to improve further

- Help children to understand that comments made when marking their literacy work are there to show them the next steps in their learning, and extend this good practice to all subjects.
- Raise children's awareness of the rich diversity of cultures in Britain and around the world.

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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?	1
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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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	3
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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
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 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**

7 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Whitchurch CE Infant School, Whitchurch, SY13 1RJ

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school. It was good to see how much you enjoy being there and how hard you try with your work. Your parents told us it is a good school and we agree with them. All of the staff care deeply for each and every one of you. They make sure you are safe and well protected, and they give you work to do that helps you to learn more and more, day by day. Those responsible for leading and managing the school help the teachers to do this. They keep a close check on the teachers' work, just as your teachers keep a close check on how well you are doing.

You told us how you like finding things out for yourselves. We found that your teachers give you plenty of opportunities to do that, in science, in mathematics, and in the 'Forest Schools' work, which you clearly enjoy. All of this keeps you very busy and anxious to find out more, and your teachers keep good records of how well you are doing. You have a very good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy. You also think very carefully, for example about how to conserve energy and care for the environment. If you keep all of this up, it will stand you in good stead for the future.

To help you learn even faster, we have asked the school to do two things. First, to help you understand that the comments teachers write in your books are to help you see how to improve your own work; second, to make you more aware of the range of different cultures in Britain and around the world.

You can help the school to improve these things by continuing to work hard, asking questions when you are unsure of how to make your work better, and by finding out for yourselves about people from different places, whether they live in this country or abroad. We hope you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now, for the rest of your lives.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell

Lead inspector