

Whitestone Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125545
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	315257
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	258
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Johnson
Headteacher	Gina Gothard
Date of previous school inspection	9 October 2003
School address	Magyar Crescent Nuneaton CV11 4SQ
Telephone number	02476 347813
Fax number	02476 388660

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Whitestone Infant School is larger than average and is a very popular school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion eligible free school meals is below average. The school holds a number of awards It has achieved the Arts Mark, Active Mark, Quality Mark for Basic Skills, Healthy Schools Gold and Healthy Schools Status Awards; it has recently applied for the ICT Mark and is working towards the silver Eco-Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Whitestone Infant School is a good school. It has outstanding features and is successful as a direct result of the excellent leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by her deputy. Their vision and effective monitoring of the school's work translate into actions that ensure every child enjoys school, attends regularly and achieves well. The headteacher provides a very clear lead in school improvement and promotes effective teamwork among all the staff. The leadership of other key staff is good.

Effective teaching and attention to individual needs enable all pupils to make good progress and reach standards that are above average overall. Teachers have good command of the subjects they teach. They have high expectations, plan effectively and generally make clear what they want the pupils to learn. Effective use of assessment information when planning enables teachers to have a clear picture of what the pupils are to learn next. However, although all lessons seen had a learning objective, these sometimes varied in their precision and there was a lack of clarity for the pupils about the criteria for success. Teachers often mark pupils' work effectively, giving them guidance on how they can improve. Nonetheless, pupils are not sufficiently involved in assessing their own progress and do not have a clear notion of what they need to be aiming at next to improve their work.

Even though pupils do well overall, the teaching of writing has not been as effective as that of reading. The school has analysed the reasons for this and has implemented a new systematic approach to the teaching of writing, including improving basic skills and increasing the range of writing styles that pupils encounter. These initiatives are just beginning to show an improvement in standards.

The school has worked hard to ensure that pupils make good academic progress, but not at the expense of their personal development, which is outstanding. All aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good and they have a good understanding about other cultures, as well as the rights and responsibilities of being good citizens.

The curriculum provides an outstanding range and breadth of opportunities for the pupils. Staff are particularly successful in providing pupils with a wealth of experiences outside lessons. Pupils really look forward to visits out and visitors into school, and their parents particularly appreciate all the extra activities that are offered to their children. An exceptionally high quality of care for pupils' personal welfare underpins the pupils' learning and supports their personal development excellently. The pupils are actively involved in the work of the school and in helping to shape decisions.

The parents are supportive of the school and are keen to be more involved in their children's learning. 'My child wouldn't go anywhere else, she is so happy', reported one parent, reflecting the views of many.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management mean that the Foundation Stage runs smoothly, with a clear focus on all children achieving well and enjoying school. The initial assessments show that on entry, the children have skills and abilities that are below those typically expected for their age, although there are some variations from year to year. The good provision enables the children to make a strong start to school. The majority are working securely within the early learning

goals in all six areas of learning by the end of Reception, with a small proportion exceeding them. Parents are kept very well informed through clear ongoing records of their child's experiences and achievements. An outstanding, excellently planned curriculum enables children to have an extensive range of experiences, including being able to develop their creative play on their very own pirate ship adventure. Facilities for outdoor play are excellent. Tasks and activities are planned to cover all areas of learning and there is a good balance of those that adults lead and those that pupils choose for themselves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils are more involved in assessing their own progress so that they clearly understand how they can improve their work.
- Raise standards in writing by ensuring a consistent high quality approach to teaching of writing skills.
- Ensure that lesson objectives are very clear and make certain that pupils know exactly what they need to do to be successful in lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school is successful in promoting good achievement for all its pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the pupils and those who have English as an additional language. The pupils' positive attitudes and excellent behaviour contribute very well to their achievement. Children make a good start to their learning in the Reception Year, and this continues into Year 1. By the end of Year 2, pupils are reaching mostly above average standards, although they have been doing better in reading than in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' excellent enjoyment of school is evident throughout the day, where they work very well together and show courtesy and consideration for each other. Even the youngest pupils are developing very good habits of collaboration and co-operation. The strong emphasis placed upon understanding and tolerance results in pupils treating each other with respect, making them very aware of each other's needs. Bullying is rare. If it does occur, pupils say that it is followed up and dealt with effectively. Pupils make good progress in developing the qualities and skills which will enable them to contribute effectively to the community and eventually to their working life. They are very committed to being healthy and fit and describe extremely well both how to do this and why it is important. They feel very safe in school and are able to give their views and opinions which are listened to by staff. The school council allows for further good participation in decision-making. However, pupils say they would welcome taking on even more responsibility for the running of this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils work hard and concentrate well. They respond very positively to the well-paced and challenging lessons that characterise most teaching. They listen well and are very keen to contribute. This confidence and willingness to engage actively in class activities reflects the

secure relationship they have with their class teachers and their sense that everyone's contribution is valued. These excellent relationships have a significant effect on the calm learning atmosphere.

Teachers and pupils use the interactive whiteboards effectively and this promotes pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills well. Strategies such as 'talk partners' are used well and are effective in keeping pupils involved in their learning because they can discuss their ideas in pairs before sharing them with the whole class.

High expectations of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enable them to achieve well in literacy and numeracy. Teachers ensure that these pupils are fully integrated into the work the class is doing and that they are ably supported by capable, competent and highly valued teaching assistants. The support provided is unobtrusive and sensitive. However, at the beginnings of lessons, teaching assistants are sometimes not used as effectively as they could be.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very responsive to local need and is very much enjoyed by all. In the words of one pupil, 'We do some brilliant things here!' It is very well enriched by visits, theme days and creative arts weeks, all of which pupils enjoy greatly. Pupils particularly look forward to ICT, where there are outstanding opportunities provided to develop skills. Physical education is also popular and exceptionally strong teaching of French is another outstanding feature. These experiences inspire pupils to undertake work from exciting real life experiences, exemplified by pupils' enthusiastic practical learning about their recent visit to Compton Verney.

There is good provision for literacy, where the school has recognised the need for greater emphasis on developing pupils speaking and listening skills, as well as the importance of improving writing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good rather than outstanding because there is an imbalance between the outstanding pastoral care that pupils receive and their good academic guidance. Nonetheless, the school is a harmonious and inclusive community with a very strong commitment to aiding pupils' all-round development. Relationships are exemplary. There is exceptional attention to pupils' personal welfare. Child protection and health and safety procedures are secure. Although there are targets in English and mathematics, they are not often referred to in lessons and pupils are sometimes unsure of them. Most parents speak very well of the school; nonetheless, the inspection took note of a very small number of parents who feel that they are not asked for their views. However, inspectors found that there are many opportunities for parents to give their views.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is highly respected amongst parents and the whole school community for her care and concern for the well-being of all pupils. The staff are rightly proud of their school and

there is no doubting their determination to improve even further. The school sets itself challenging targets and is usually successful in meeting them because teachers know their pupils well and use the system for tracking pupils' attainment and progress effectively to identify underachievement. Subject coordinators have a good understanding of their subject's strengths and areas for development. They have regular opportunities to monitor pupils' work in classes so that they can see how subjects are being taught and how well pupils progress.

Capacity to improve is good. Thorough self-evaluation allows the school to have an accurate picture of where development is needed. Sometimes, however, leaders merely describe what has been done or is planned, without analysing clearly the expected or actual outcomes of their actions. Governors are well informed and actively support the school's drive for improvement.

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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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1
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	1
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

Dear Children

Inspection of Whitestone Infant School, Nuneaton, CV11 4SQ

Thank you very much for being so welcoming and friendly towards us during our recent visit to your school. We very much enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you and your teachers about how well you are doing. We thought you would like to know what we have said about your school, which is a good school.

You behave very well and you are very kind and considerate to each other. In lessons, we think you listen carefully to what your teachers have to tell you and you try very hard. You really enjoy coming to school and your attendance is better than in many other schools. You have told us you feel safe and secure. We think you know the importance of staying healthy and taking regular exercise. We really enjoyed watching your art activity week. Your teachers look after you very well and listen carefully to what you have to say. They work very hard to help you learn.

We have made some suggestions to help the school get even better. We have asked all your teachers to tell you exactly what you need to do to be successful in lessons and to tell you how you can improve your work. We have also suggested that you could do even better in writing and we have asked your teachers to help you with this.

Many things are good about your school and you, together with your teachers, can make it even better. Please keep working hard and doing the best you can. We wish you well in the future. I hope you have great fun exploring and sailing on your brand new pirate ship.

Jacqueline Wordsworth

Her Majesty's Inspector