

Wheatfields Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 131197 |
| Local Authority | CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA |
| Inspection number | 315748 |
| Inspection dates | 27–28 November 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Linda Killman HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 459 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Maureen Clarke |
| Headteacher | Dr Chris Marshall |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Nene Way St Ives Cambridgeshire PE27 3WF |
| Telephone number | 01480 466919 |
| Fax number | 01480 498248 |

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
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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

Wheatfields is a larger than average-sized primary school. The former infant and junior schools amalgamated into one primary school in 2006. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds; few have free school meals. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English has risen steeply this year to 17.7 %, which is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average; those with a statement of special educational need is broadly average. When children start in the Reception class, their attainment is generally in line with national expectations.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good, effective and inclusive school where everyone matters, especially the pupils. As a direct result of effective leadership and management, two schools have successfully merged as one. Governors fulfil their role exceptionally well. One parent captures the views of many others commenting that Wheatfields is, 'a lovely warm and welcoming school'. There is generally strong performance across all aspects of the school's work and most parents value and appreciate all that the school provides for their children. Nonetheless, a small minority of parents feel that the school does not always communicate with them effectively. The headteacher is forward looking, innovative and realistic. He provides committed and professional leadership; staff share his vision for the future because he communicates it so well. The staff is a committed, cheerful group of professionals striving for ongoing improvement. As a result, this is a happy, cohesive school where mostly good teaching results in pupils' good achievement and successfully promotes their personal development and well-being.

From starting points that broadly match expectations, most pupils make good progress to achieve above average standards before they leave. However, variation in the quality of teaching and learning results in pockets of moderate progress in some lessons and accelerated progress in others.

The curriculum is good, impressively enriched and meets all statutory requirements. The pupils have much to look forward to and enjoy. As one parent puts it, 'The teachers seem to go that extra mile as far as activities outside of school are concerned.' The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to progress well but is less effective in matching the needs and abilities of pupils learning English as a new language or those with particular gifts and talents.

The pupils' behaviour is mostly good in class and around the school. They make good relationships with adults and each other and are keen to take on responsibility, because they are well cared for and supported. Only one pupil has been excluded since the school opened. Racist incidents are rare but treated seriously. Attendance is average but improving. The pupils know how to stay safe, be healthy and where to seek support from adults if they need it. Their spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. Wheatfields pupils develop good social and learning skills to equip them for their transfer to secondary school and future lives.

This new school is off to a flying start. The leadership and management's accurate diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses underpinned by a carefully crafted plan for development is already bearing fruit and contributes to the school's good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The adults promptly assess every child's starting point and check their progress so that planning and provision steadily builds on what they already know, understand and can do. Consequently, the majority make good progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning. The introduction of daily teaching of letter sounds (phonics) leads to pupils' growing confidence as beginner readers and writers. The pupils are confident, happy, enthusiastic individuals, keen to learn and use key skills. Adult-led activities are purposeful and well chosen but there is sometimes too much direction and this

restricts opportunities for creativity and decision-making. The outdoor play area is underdeveloped as a tempting space to encourage spontaneous and creative play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve consistency in the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils achieve as much as they can.
- Improve provision for pupils whose first language is not English and those with particular gifts and talents.
- In the Foundation Stage, provide more opportunities for pupils to initiate activities, take decisions and experiment, especially outdoors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Most pupils make good progress in relation to their capability and starting points. Challenging targets set for Year 6 pupils in English and mathematics were exceeded in the 2007 national tests. In science, almost two thirds of pupils achieved the higher Level 5 showing exceptionally strong performance in the subject. The school identifies underachievement quickly and introduces effective strategies to boost learning and get pupils back on track. Pupils with learning difficulties receive very good support and make good progress towards their targets. Those for whom English is not their first language make moderate progress in relation to their peers because programmes specifically designed to meet their needs are underdeveloped.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils are polite, show good attitudes and are confident yet respectful. They say that they enjoy school and most attend regularly. The school is doing all it can to improve attendance with diligent monitoring, swift action and incentives. Pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe. They take part in a wide range of physical activities in school and beyond the school day. Through the school council, and a good range of other jobs and responsibilities, they are able to make an effective contribution towards the school and wider community. Participation in fund-raising events recently culminated in pupils raising 4,000 pounds for a national charity. Older pupils are conscientious in fulfilling their duties as 'playground buddies'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good, but not yet consistently good enough to meet the school's high academic aspirations for all its pupils. Teachers plan conscientiously and in the best lessons provide pupils with activities that are lively, challenge their thinking and accelerate their learning. They are skilled at getting the best out of all pupils, who respond enthusiastically to the high expectations held of them. Teaching assistants play a positive part in promoting good progress, especially for pupils needing extra help. Pupils make slower progress in lessons where learning is restricted by too much teacher talk and too few opportunities for them to be actively engaged in their own learning. Marking is well used by some teachers to move learning forward, but less so by

others. The assessment arrangements for checking pupils' progress and targeting resources towards areas of particular need are highly effective in English and mathematics, but not sufficiently well developed in information and communication technology (ICT) and most other subjects for this purpose.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has some outstanding features, as well as some areas in need of development. All statutory requirements are met. There is an increasingly successful focus on literacy and numeracy that is having a beneficial impact on standards, especially in writing. The provision for ICT is satisfactory, but is not sufficiently embedded in pupils' learning across the curriculum because classroom computers are not used regularly enough. Lessons frequently provide a range of stimulating and challenging experiences for pupils and are supported by an outstanding range of enrichment activities that they greatly value and enjoy. Music is a notable strength in this respect. A good start has been made in revising the curriculum to make links between subjects, inject more creativity and develop pupils' skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers at this school care well for pupils because they know them individually. Pupil's ideas and thoughts are taken seriously. Provision for meeting statutory requirements to ensure pupil's safety is thorough and child protection procedures are fully in place and understood by staff. Academic guidance is a good feature of the school's education and contributes to pupils' good progress. Pupils know what their targets are and they find that the helpful comments in their books direct them towards a higher level. Tracking systems are well developed. Pupils are encouraged to develop self-esteem through the school's ethos and commitment of staff. Those needing extra encouragement to feel good about themselves and to enjoy school are supported expertly and sensitively by learning mentors, through the school's social inclusion project.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The inclusion and success of all learners is central to the headteacher's vision and drives the direction for the school. His sensitive management and determined leadership are significant ingredients in the successful creation of this harmonious school community. The governing body shares this vision, is supportive and knowledgeable, yet rigorously holds the school to account. Governance is outstanding. The leadership team is committed and effective because they are professionally well equipped to fulfil their management roles. Drawing upon a wide range of valuable evidence stemming from good quality assurance activities, they have a clear view of where strengths and weaknesses lie. Strategic planning is of good quality. Roles of middle managers are beginning to develop but, newly in post, they have not yet undertaken monitoring activities to inform future planning. Leaders and managers successfully focus on raising standards and achievement and promoting the well-being of learners. Their upbeat and reflective attitude ensures that there is no room for complacency and contributes to the school's good capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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|---|----|
| 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 | NA |
| 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

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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

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| 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 | 1 |
| 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

29 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wheatfields Primary School, St Ives PE27 3WF

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently to see how well you are learning. We were very impressed with your courtesy and good manners. Many of you were willing to tell us about school life at Wheatfields; this was a great help. We have thought carefully about all that you told us and I would like to explain why we think yours is such a good school.

It is a huge project to bring two schools together when they are used to being separate. Your headteacher and the governors have worked hard and successfully achieved this. Your teachers care about you, look after you and make sure that you learn all that you should so that you reach and often go beyond the standards expected for your age by the end of Year 6. They give you helpful feedback about how well you are doing and what you can do to improve. You are capable and confident learners. The exciting range of school trips and after-school clubs means that you always have something to look forward to and enjoy. We are pleased to see that you are all trying hard to win your reward for good attendance!

To make the school even better we have asked the staff and governors to:

- make sure that all lessons are as exciting as the best ones so that you learn as fast as you can
- find more ways of helping those of you who do not usually speak English at home
- introduce extra challenges for those of you with special gifts and talents
- create a really exciting outdoor play area for the Reception classes and give them more chances to use their own ideas when they are playing.

You are coping really well with all of the changes. The new hall is fantastic and I am sure that you will all enjoy using it when it is finished. Wheatfields Primary School is off to a flying start and everyone is working hard to make it better and better! Enjoy your time at the school and I wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman

Her Majesty's Inspector