

Whitehouse Common Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132007
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	315900
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	459
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jaap Vos
Headteacher	Dale Hill
Date of previous school inspection	2 June 2003
School address	Cotysmore Road Sutton Coldfield B75 6BL
Telephone number	0121 4641918
Fax number	0121 4641911

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2007
Inspection number	315900

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large primary school that mainly serves the private residential area in which it is situated. It is on a split site, though all parts are within easy walking distance. Most pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion entitled to free school meals are below average. Pupils' attainment on entry is above the level expected. The headteacher has been in post three years whilst the deputy headteacher was appointed a year ago. The school provides before and after school care facilities for its pupils on an optional basis. This provision is managed by the governing body and was inspected by a Child Care Inspector at the same time as the school inspection. The school has won the following awards: Basic Skills Quality Mark, Silver Arts Mark, International Schools, Litter Charter and Extended Schools. Education for Sustainable Development (Environmental awareness and work) was inspected separately in March 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 and improving school with significant strengths in some areas of its work. Standards are improving and are high by the time pupils leave. This has been achieved through the very clear direction given by the headteacher and the way senior leaders, staff and governors work closely together, intent on raising standards further and making the school even better. Pupils are nurtured, very well cared for and flourish in the school's family atmosphere. Pupils' good personal development and behaviour are springboards for all the school does.

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Children in Nursery and Reception get off to a good start and they have achieved or exceeded the standards expected of their age by the end of the Reception. There has been a rising trend in standards over several years and they are now well above average by Year 2 in writing and mathematics and exceptionally high in reading. This is giving pupils a strong start to their junior education and the school has recognised that a rise in expectations is necessary as these pupils move through the school. By Year 6, pupils reach exceptionally high standards in reading, mathematics and science and well above average standards in writing. New arrangements for checking pupils' progress and improving teaching have played a significant part in improving achievement.

The quality of teaching is now good overall. Improvements have been achieved because previous performance has been rigorously reviewed and difficult decisions about teaching have been taken. This has led to pupils making better progress. Evidence from school data indicates that many of the older pupils did not always perform as well as they should have in the past and are now in the process of 'catching-up'. Very positive teaching in Year 6 is accelerating their progress. The school is also focusing on raising achievement for more capable pupils. However, there are still a minority of lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2 when challenge for more capable pupils slows and these pupils should do better. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and achieve well.

The good curriculum, particularly strong in the arts and sport, really stimulates pupils' enjoyment in learning. The emphasis on keeping safe and healthy provides them with good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils feel very safe in school and free from risks and bullying. This is reflected in their good attendance and keenness to come to school. The care, support and guidance of pupils are good. Assessment systems are rigorous and help the school to know how well it is doing. The school knows itself well and has identified its strengths and weaker areas. It is fully aware that there is work to do to make sure teachers consistently use the demanding targets to move children on in their learning and help them to understand what further steps they need to take.

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders provide strong leadership and management systems. The new leadership structure is empowering leaders at all levels so they can play a full part in raising achievement. Governors are both supportive and challenging and play key roles in helping to steer the school. The rate of recent improvement shows the school has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents recognise the Foundation Stage as a strength of the school. One expressed the views of many parents in saying 'I am extremely happy my children receive their early years education

here'. Children settle into Nursery very readily and they are very well cared for and kept safe. They enjoy being in Nursery and Reception and the lively learning activities spark their interest. Children are given a good balance between learning through purposeful play and adult-led sessions. The school strongly promotes children's literacy and numeracy skills in the context of a broad and practical curriculum. Children make good progress in the areas of learning throughout the Foundation Stage. By the time children begin Year 1, they have reached the expected levels and a substantial number exceed them, including in reading, writing and mathematics. The quality of teaching and assessment systems is good. The Foundation Stage is well led and the staff are a close and effective team. Very capable children are identified early, although provision for them is not yet consistent and the school has identified this as an area for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of good teaching and progress by making sure there is always enough challenge for more capable pupils.
- Ensure teachers use targets more effectively to promote good learning and help pupils to know their next steps for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good. They enter the school with above average attainment and standards are exceptionally high by Year 6 in reading, mathematics and science and well above average in writing.

Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. Standards in Year 2 have been improving steadily over the past few years after a dip. They are now exceptionally high in reading and well above average in writing and mathematics. High reading standards throughout the school reflect the impact of the school's hard work in improving reading provision and assessment.

In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is good compared with their starting points. Pupils in older classes 'catch up' well from their past underachievement when they were in younger junior classes. Strong teaching in Year 6 and 'catch up' programmes are driving up standards. However, there is a need in both Key Stages 1 and 2 to ensure more capable pupils make consistently good progress. Their progress sometimes slows when there is too much teaching to the average. The latest test results for Year 6 pupils show considerable improvement in mathematics and science compared with previous results. Staff subject training, rigorous assessment of pupils' progress and demanding targets are contributing to improving achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils thrive in each other's company. Relationships are excellent at all levels and, as a result, pupils are happy and secure. They like and respect the adults in the school. 'I've enjoyed being with my teacher today,' said one. Pupils usually concentrate very well but when the pace of teaching and learning slows their attention occasionally wanders. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. International links are strong and pupils learn a lot about other cultures, for example, through 'European Day'. Pupils show an excellent understanding of how to stay safe. Their enjoyment in keeping fit is demonstrated by the large number of pupils taking exercise through the extra-curricular sports clubs. They make a good contribution

to the community when they raise money for charities. Pupils develop good teamwork skills, for example, through their environmental work in the school grounds and through residential visits which focus on problem solving and decision making. They learn to care for and respect the environment well through their work on recycling and litter picking. Their good basic skills and personal development ensure that pupils are well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

In the Foundation Stage, teachers provide a good blend between direct teaching and allowing children to explore and work creatively and independently. Throughout the school, classrooms are attractive and positive learning environments. Lessons are interesting and teachers engage pupils well by their question and answer techniques. They explain lesson purposes clearly and pupils learn how to review their own learning. Pupils are given good opportunities to express their ideas and opinions. Teachers have established clear expectations of behaviour and pupils are usually keen and attentive. However, there are a few shortcomings when work does not challenge the more capable pupils and the pace of their learning slows. Teachers' planning is good overall but at times they do not take pupils' prior attainment into account enough when planning lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum promotes pupils' academic and social development, enabling most to achieve well by the time they leave school. Those with musical or artistic gifts are very well provided for through an exciting and stimulating curriculum. The school is now focusing on improving the curriculum for more capable pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements, receive well directed support and work from tailor-made programmes that help them make good progress against their personal targets. Close attention to the social and emotional aspects of learning is having a very positive impact on behaviour. A very wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, which includes sports, music tuition, choir, gardening, information and communication technology, and modern foreign languages, is on offer with the very high take up demonstrating pupils' sheer enjoyment of this. The school has forged highly effective links with partner schools and the local community to extend the curriculum through visits and shared expertise, for example, in mathematics and the performing arts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There is a high level of personal support for all pupils within a family atmosphere. Child protection procedures and arrangements for safeguarding are rigorous and well understood by staff. The school works closely with outside agencies to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Time in the 'den' and outside in the peace of 'Abigail's garden' is used well to provide counselling and support. Systems for tracking pupils' progress, recently improved, are very thorough. School leaders use these meticulously for evaluating pupils' progress and the impact of provision on progress. Teachers, too, are becoming more skilled at

analysing achievement. However, they do not always use the targets set to plan sufficiently demanding work. Pupils do not always know their targets and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior staff has provided clear direction since the last inspection and enabled a common sense of purpose. Strengths in the quality of education have been sustained whilst more account has been taken of the academic progress made by pupils. Governors have ensured sensible financial controls and earmarked a budget that supports the implementation of the well conceived school improvement plan effectively. Structures have been set in place to widen leadership responsibilities for subjects, phases and key aspects across the staff. Leaders at all levels have undertaken monitoring of teaching and learning, giving the school an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of its provision. However, staffing issues last year held back extended monitoring and more work remains to be done to fully embed the process. In pinpointing pockets of underachievement, school leaders quickly developed a more robust tracking system so that the progress of classes and groups of pupils against their collectively challenging targets can be assessed. This is already making a difference and, together with the school's strong focus on inclusion, leads to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities making good progress. The school recognises that further work is required to develop the consistency in provision for more capable pupils, including ones who are gifted and talented.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	1
How well 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 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

2 October 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Whitehouse Common Primary School, Sutton Coldfield, B75 6BL

I am writing to say thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school recently. You certainly seem to enjoy school and it was good to hear about all the extra activities in which you are involved. I also want to tell you what we found out about your school.

First, you need to know you go to a good school where you make good progress. Here are some good things about your school:

- Your headteacher and school managers lead you all well and your teachers and the school governors are working hard to make the school even better.
- You make good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- You behave well and get on together very well indeed. This makes your school a happy one.
- Teaching is good and getting better because of the way the school is improving your learning opportunities.
- You use the beautiful school grounds well and take care of your world by recycling and picking up litter.
- Teachers take good care of you and make sure you are kept very safe.

This is what we are asking the school to change:

- Make sure you are always given hard enough work.
- Make sure teachers help you to know your learning targets and how to improve your work.

I hope you will continue to enjoy school and work hard at using your targets so your work gets better and better.

Best wishes

Eileen Chadwick Lead Inspector



2 October 2007

Dear Children

**Inspection of Whitehouse Common Primary School, Sutton Coldfield,
B75 6BL**

I am writing to say thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school recently. You certainly seem to enjoy school and it was good to hear about all the extra activities in which you are involved. I also want to tell you what we found out about your school.

First, you need to know you go to a good school where you make good progress. Here are some good things about your school:

- Your headteacher and school managers lead you all well and your teachers and the school governors are working hard to make the school even better.
- You make good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- You behave well and get on together very well indeed. This makes your school a happy one.
- Teaching is good and getting better because of the way the school is improving your learning opportunities.
- You use the beautiful school grounds well and take care of your world by recycling and picking up litter.
- Teachers take good care of you and make sure you are kept very safe.

This is what we are asking the school to change:

- Make sure you are always given hard enough work.
- Make sure teachers help you to know your learning targets and how to improve your work.

I hope you will continue to enjoy school and work hard at using your targets so your work gets better and better.

Best wishes

Eileen Chadwick
Lead Inspector