

Whaddon CofE First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110415
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325147
Inspection date	16 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Thomas-Pounce

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	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	17
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Hazel Hedges
Headteacher	Mrs Diana Travis
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Stock Lane Whaddon Milton Keynes MK17 0LS
Telephone number	01908 501719
Fax number	0

Age group	4–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Whaddon is a small school, which draws its pupils from the immediate locality. The school has close links with the local church. It is able to cater for pupils up to the age of eight. Some parents choose to move their children at the end of Year 2, and so currently there are no Year 3 children on roll. There are two classes, one comprising pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and another for Years 1 and 2 pupils. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. No pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has gained the National Healthy School Award and the Active Sports Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Whaddon School provides a good quality of education. It has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Good academic standards are combined with excellent personal development, a rich curriculum and outstanding care, guidance and support. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. The leadership and management and the governance of the school are good.

The school makes very good use of mixed-age classes, by encouraging younger pupils to learn from the older pupils, who in turn benefit from helping the younger children. As a result of the consistently good teaching and a highly effective curriculum, all pupils are prepared well for later learning. In this small school the pupils are taught in two classes, each of which has a wide range of ages and attainment levels. The small class size and the teachers' excellent understanding of each pupil's stage of development help pupils to be happy and successful learners who make good progress. Teachers make sure that pupils are given clear guidance about how to improve as teachers make each step of learning clear to pupils.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. This comment from a parent, 'Lovely, friendly village school with high standards', is a typical response. Pupils' above-average attendance illustrates their enjoyment of school life.

Pupils enjoy sport and there is a high rate of participation in the good range of extra-curricular activities that supplement an excellent curriculum. The school has worked hard to improve extra-curricular activities. These are now strong elements of the school's curriculum, as are the wider opportunities offered by trips and visits. Lively and colourful displays and the lovely sensory garden, designed by the children, illustrate proud involvement in school life. The village May Day extravaganza is a key feature in the life of the school. Pupils display a strong sense of community, in school and in the local and wider community. They act as playground leaders and 'buddies', looking after those who may need a friend. Pupils' behaviour and care for others is exemplary, both in the classroom and when playing outside in the extensive school grounds. Their understanding of how to keep safe and be healthy is excellent.

The headteacher, effectively supported by staff and governors, has established robust systems and procedures, clearly linked to improving provision and raising standards. Self-evaluation is rigorous. The careful checking of the quality of teaching and learning by the headteacher and by local authority staff has played a major part in the improvements that have taken place since the last inspection. The headteacher has also put in place very effective systems to track progress and identify individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Leaders know that there is relative weakness in the quality of pupils' writing. Although standards and achievement are good overall, they are lower in writing than in other subjects. The school has recently introduced more opportunities for teachers to model writing to the whole class and for pupils to write at length in order to consolidate their newly learnt skills. The school is aware that writing remains an area for development. The school's success in achieving good-quality provision since the previous inspection, and in effectively addressing weaker elements of its work, gives confidence that it is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The school meets the needs of all children through the provision of an exciting curriculum that engages them and makes them enthusiastic learners. Rigorous assessments are made by adults about what children know and can do. This helps them to track their progress and pick up any difficulties and give support early on. Consequently, children make remarkably good progress, especially in their personal and social development where they grow rapidly in confidence. They show outstanding engagement and enjoyment, being eager to join with their classmates in the wide range of interesting tasks and activities. They rapidly learn to be independent and take a highly active part in lessons. Children are quick to contribute ideas and to show what they know.

When children join the school they show the expected skills for their age in most areas of learning. The very good progress they make is helped significantly, because activities are planned to build on their prior learning. This enables all children to use and develop their skills by learning in many different ways. Children's very good achievement is underpinned by their willingness to work effectively with one another and with staff. They show a very secure understanding of what they are learning. They use a variety of equipment safely and show healthy attitudes, for example by independently making sure they drink enough water. They learn to be active, inquisitive problem-solvers. Children develop their understanding of the wider world; they were very enthusiastic when finding out about dinosaurs. This inspired them to set up their own dinosaur museum in part of the classroom. They also experienced what it would be like to be inside an egg by climbing into large boxes and recording how it felt. Exemplary leadership fosters a fully inclusive approach. New facilities for a superb, extensive outdoor classroom, built since the last inspection, have a very positive impact on children's learning and development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on and extend the strategies to promote pupils' progress in writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, pupils' achievement is good and standards are usually above average by the end of Year 2. The headteacher's drive for improvement has had a positive impact on standards and progress. However, small year groups mean that there can be considerable differences year on year in the proportion of pupils gaining different levels in their work. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 show that standards in reading and mathematics remained high in 2008, but writing results were lower than in the previous year. In reading and mathematics a high proportion of pupils reached especially high levels, but in writing fewer pupils attained these standards. Reading standards are well above average because of the good teaching of key skills and an excellent partnership with parents to support their children's learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' excellent personal development, highly positive attitudes, excellent attendance and behaviour contribute very substantially to their learning. Pupils say they thoroughly enjoy school because of the very many exciting activities they are offered. Pupils really enjoy the

opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles and their prowess in bouncing and skipping is recorded and celebrated with pride. Pupils willingly take on responsibility, such as older pupils being 'buddies' for younger ones. They are happy and cooperative at playtimes. Pupils say there is no bullying and that everyone gets on well. Pupils feel safe and secure at school and members of the school council are very active. Pupils' involvement in the local community is outstanding; for instance, at the May Fayre the whole school performs Maypole Dancing, the children lead the procession through the village and they take the roles of May King and Queen. People from the local community regularly help in the school and pupils thoroughly enjoy working with them, for instance when tending the school's garden. Pupils also develop tolerance and understanding of other cultures through a good programme of global education. This includes successful multicultural weeks and other regular events, which provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate the cultural diversity within this country. They are well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The pupils make good progress because they have a good attitude to work and respond very well to the teachers' skilled input. Typically, lessons are well structured, so that the pupils know what they are going to learn and how it links to what they have learned previously. The teachers and teaching assistants work together very well as a team, sharing their expertise. Groupings within the classes are flexible so that pupils are able to work at the right level, regardless of age. Effective tracking systems are used well to check on pupils' progress. The teachers provide interesting and challenging activities that are well matched to each pupil's learning needs. Extra challenge is provided for any pupil who is especially gifted or talented and additional support is focused on any pupil with additional learning needs. Sometimes plenary sessions are used well to review and consolidate new learning, but this is not consistently the case.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum helps to raise pupils' confidence by enhancing their ideas and actively promotes collaboration, exploration and independence. Pupils are excited about their learning because activities are absorbing. This makes them keen to learn, inquisitive and very proud of all their achievements. They are given a good range of interesting things to learn about, and links between subjects and across year groups are strong. A good example of this was the Living Eggs project, which formed a part of the feathers and fur project for the older pupils, and the project on animals for the Reception class. Joint planning ensures that teachers' expertise is extended so that activities are often innovative and challenging. Pupils benefit from many links with other local schools, with the local community and the wider world. The school has developed strong links with local residents and parents to enrich pupils' understanding of cultures in the UK and around the world. Pupils learn how to greet each other in many languages and celebrate religious festivals and customs in a variety of ways throughout the year. There is a very good range of clubs, which are very well attended. All pupils benefit from learning to speak French. Spanish is taught as an after school activity.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding because of high-quality pastoral care combined with detailed academic guidance and well-targeted support. Procedures for identifying the pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses are very well developed. Pupils are well known and relationships are very strong. Through the helpful marking and the good use of targets, pupils are given effective and clear guidance about how to improve their work. Pupils know their targets and are regularly involved in their own assessment. There are strong links with the church and the work of school is seen as a key part of the village community. In this welcoming ethos, pupils and their parents quickly become part of the school family. Outside agencies are used effectively to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Procedures to keep pupils safe and secure are robust and fully meet government requirements. This is a truly inclusive school where individuals are all valued.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is particularly effective and provides strong and purposeful leadership that is valued highly by parents. One parent wrote of 'the excellent job the headteacher has done to improve and develop the school'. She provides a very clear direction to the work of the school, so that all the staff know exactly what their role is in seeking continual improvement, and they give her their full support. The headteacher has turned the small staff numbers into an advantage, with everyone being involved in the school's development. She is supported well by a strong, cohesive team of staff and governors. Together they have established a school community in which pupils have a strong sense of belonging. Governors and the Headteacher have worked hard to reverse the decline in admissions by actively promoting the school in the community. Good links have been made with other providers, including pre-schools, and the projected admission numbers for September 2009 have greatly improved. There is good commitment to promoting community cohesion. As a result of the very good leadership of the headteacher, the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection.

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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?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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/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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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 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?	1

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**

25 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Whaddon CofE First School, Milton Keynes, MK17 0LS

I would like to thank you for your welcome when I came to inspect your school; particular thanks to the school council who talked to me about school life. I enjoyed seeing you in your classrooms and talking to you before school and at playtime about all the exciting things you do.

There are many really special things about your school. You are very enthusiastic and hard-working, and you all look after each very well indeed. There are lots of out-of-school activities, which you find interesting and enjoyable. You told me how much you enjoy school and I saw that for myself by your outstanding behaviour in lessons and around the school. You learn so many exciting things in school, like looking after the chicks when they had hatched out of their eggs, as well as making such beautiful mosaics for your lovely sensory garden.

Whaddon is a good school. Your parents wrote to say how happy you are at school and I can see why. All the adults know you really well and take very good care of you. Your teachers and teaching assistants make your lessons interesting and enjoyable. They plan carefully so that you all make good progress and your standards at Year 2 are above average in reading and mathematics. I saw that when they mark your work, as well as giving you encouragement, they also tell you what you need to do to get even better.

Mrs Travis and the other school leaders know what is good about your school and although some things are outstanding, they want to make it even better. I have asked the school to do the following important thing.

- Help you make faster progress in your writing.

Very well done to you all and best wishes for your future.

Yours faithfully

Susan Thomas-Pounce

Lead Inspector