

St White's Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115520
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326213
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	David Curtis

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	274
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	S Doggett
Headteacher	P S Woodward
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St White's Road Cinderford GL14 3DH
Telephone number	01594 822311
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a slightly larger than average sized primary school. It is situated on two sites separated by a busy road. Seven of the ten classes are taught in temporary buildings on the other side of the road from the main school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is slightly below the national average; most of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in two Reception classes housed in the main school building. There is a privately run pre-school group (Early Birds) housed in the main school building adjacent to the Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. There are strengths in pupils' personal development and well-being which are underpinned by effective pastoral care and support. Behaviour is good and most pupils enjoy their lessons and work hard. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles, with many taking part in sports activities at lunchtime or after school. Pupils feel safe in school and say that if bullying occurs, it is dealt with effectively. Staff take great care to ensure that when having to cross the road to and from the main school, pupils' safety is paramount. Pupils enjoy and benefit from the many opportunities they receive to contribute to the day-to-day life of the school. The school council is an effective voice for the pupils.

Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those expected for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. They make satisfactory progress, but standards are below average at the end of Reception. Children do not spend enough time on child-initiated activities, nor do they spend enough time learning outdoors. As a result, their skills in independent learning are held back. In Years 1 to 6, achievement is satisfactory, although standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. Recent successful initiatives in mathematics are raising standards in a subject where previously they have been exceptionally low. In mathematics, pupils still struggle with the use and application of mathematics, especially when working with word problems. A lack of understanding of mathematical vocabulary impedes their progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, with the headteacher and senior leaders providing a more concentrated and determined focus on raising standards and achievement. Key staff recognise that in the past they were concentrating on too many initiatives which did not impact on improving standards and achievement. Currently, the school is working to raise the awareness of all staff to their responsibility to raise standards and improve pupils' achievement. The school has a satisfactory capacity for future improvement.

Whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, there are increasing examples of good teaching, especially in Years 5 and 6, which are driving up standards, especially in mathematics. However, there remains an inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning as there are still occasions when teachers spend too much time talking to pupils and expectations as to what pupils should achieve in lessons are not high enough. Relationships with pupils are good and teachers manage behaviour very effectively. The curriculum is satisfactory, with strengths in the range of extra-curricular clubs and enrichment activities in sport, music and the arts. Such enrichment activities have a positive impact on strengths in pupils' personal development.

The quality of academic guidance is improving, but is not consistent across the school. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils respond more enthusiastically to individual targets which tell them the levels at which they are working, rather than whole-class targets. Teachers' marking is inconsistent. Whilst there are good examples which tell pupils how to improve their work, other examples consist of ticks, or comments such as 'Well done!' On occasions, teachers do not pick up on spelling errors or computation errors in mathematics and, as a result, pupils' errors are compounded.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Based on their starting points, children's achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average in all six areas of learning. The recent focus on the teaching of letters and sounds is having a positive impact on improving children's communication, language and literacy skills. In their personal, social and emotional development, progress is hindered because children do not have enough opportunities across the school day to choose activities for themselves. As a result, they do not develop sufficient skills of independent learning. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with strengths in the teaching of key skills in adult-led activities. However, planning does not provide enough opportunities for outdoor learning, even allowing for the constraints of the accommodation. There is no regular free flow of activities between indoors and outdoors. Regular assessments of children's progress are made in their 'Learning Diaries', using a commercially produced scheme which has not been updated to take into account the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework introduced in September 2008. There is close liaison with the onsite pre-school and with other settings in the locality. There are good links with parents who, through the questionnaires, expressed how pleased they are with the way children settle into school. Children are well cared for on a day-to-basis, as is evident in the way they feel happy, secure and confident in school. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a good focus on the importance of teaching key skills, especially in speaking and listening, as a crucial need for children starting school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve, in mathematics, pupils' skills in the use and application of number in problem solving and improve their knowledge and understanding of mathematical vocabulary.
- Provide more opportunities for child-initiated activities and outdoor learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Improve the consistency and use of individual pupil targets so that pupils are clear about what they need to learn next.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

There is clear evidence that the school has reversed the recent downward trend in standards and achievement. In Years 1 and 2, the successful teaching of letters and sounds contributes to improving literacy skills. The most recent school data show that standards at the end of Year 6, while below average, are rising. There is a slight increase in the number of pupils reaching Level 5 in English and mathematics. In English, pupils show a good understanding of writing accounts of factual information. In mathematics, pupils' confidence in calculations and mental arithmetic is improving. However, in writing, standards of spelling are not high enough and in mathematics, pupils' use and application of numbers in problem solving and investigations remains a weaker area.

More able pupils are not always fully challenged in lessons because work is not consistently matched to their needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory

progress against the targets in their individual education plans with quality support from teachers and dedicated teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. They showed a real sense of concern and compassion when they lost contact with a pupil they sponsor in Haiti who 'disappeared' after the devastation caused by a hurricane last year. Pupils take their responsibilities on the school council and, for example, as peer mediators very seriously. They particularly enjoy being able to set up their own clubs at lunchtimes and respond enthusiastically to running competitions they devise themselves. In Year 6, pupils speak knowledgeably about the dangers of putting too much salt on their food and not eating chips! Attendance is satisfactory, with the school working hard to promote good attendance. Improving standards and achievement mean that pupils' economic well-being is satisfactory when they transfer to secondary education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In most lessons, pupils enjoy learning and respond enthusiastically to challenges. For example, in a mathematics lesson in a mixed Year 3 and 4 class, there was a real buzz of excitement and motivation in a game to 'beat the calculator'. In the main, teachers share the learning objective with pupils. Where teaching is particularly effective and pupils make good progress, pupils have very clear expectations as to what they should achieve based on 'must, should and could'. However, the use of such expectations is inconsistent. There are times when pupils spend too long listening to teachers and begin to lose interest and concentration. Teachers make good use of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning. The teaching of mathematics is improving as the result of revised pupil groupings and the deployment of additional resources.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school complies with the requirements of the national curriculum. Revisions to the curriculum encourage pupils to make more effective links between subjects. This is evident in their writing, although too little emphasis is placed on developing accuracy, such as in spelling. In mathematics, the curriculum does not consistently meet the needs of all pupils in improving their use and application of key skills in problem solving and investigations. Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra-curricular provision and enrichment activities. Pupils are encouraged to take part in sporting competitions and in a 'Nature Quiz' against other schools in the county. Such enrichment activities, together with the school's provision for personal, social and health education, have a positive impact on strengths in pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school complies with the requirements for safeguarding children and for child protection. Staff know their pupils well and take care to ensure that they are safe in school, especially with

the frequent need to move between the school buildings. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported effectively. Most parents are happy with the way the school cares for their children.

All classes have targets for literacy and numeracy which are displayed clearly. In Years 5 and 6, the school is introducing individual pupil targets for literacy and numeracy which tell pupils the levels at which they are working and what must be done to achieve the next level. Responses from pupils show that they welcome such targets. However, these are not embedded across the school, nor are teachers consistently reminding pupils of their class targets in the other year groups, especially at the start of lessons. As a result, pupils are not always sure of their next steps in learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has worked tirelessly in taking on a wide range of initiatives to address the previous decline in standards in the school. Effective support from the local authority, governors and the senior leadership team has sharpened the focus on increasing pupil motivation in order to raise standards. As a result, the school is now monitoring teaching and learning more effectively and using this information to prioritise initiatives. Examples include earlier intervention strategies to raise achievement in mathematics and more centralised recording of data. Improved use of assessment data allows staff to identify areas of persistent underachievement over a period of time. In addition, challenging targets are set based on reliable data. However, not all key staff have a full overview of the performance of each year group, especially in literacy. The school improvement plan has rightly identified the raising of achievement in mathematics and writing as key priorities. The school works within an increasingly global framework while maintaining a strong sense of identity as a school community. However, governors have not carried out a full audit of the school's contribution to community cohesion.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

30 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St White's Primary School, Cinderford GL14 3DH

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome at your school. We enjoyed meeting you in lessons and around your school. In particular, I would like to thank the school council for giving up part of their lunch break to meet with us.

At the moment yours is a satisfactory school, although there are some good things happening. These are the things that we thought you do well.

- You work hard in lessons which helps you to improve your learning, especially in mathematics.
- Your behaviour is good and you really enjoy running competitions and taking part in after-school clubs.
- Teachers help you to understand what you will be learning at the start of lessons.
- You show care and concern for your friend in Haiti whom you sponsor.
- Staff take great care to ensure that you are safe in school, especially when moving between the two sites.
- Those who lead and manage your school are determined to help you make good progress and achieve higher standards in your work.

There are a number of areas which we think need improving so we have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do the following.

- Help you to improve the way in which you use number skills when doing mathematical problems and to help you understand word problems.
- Make sure that those of you in Reception have more time to choose your own activities and to spend more time learning outdoors.
- Make sure that you all have individual targets in literacy and numeracy that will help you to understand your next steps in learning.

I know that you will continue to work hard for your teachers and enjoy all the extra things you can do in school.

Yours faithfully

David Curtis

Lead inspector