

Whitehills Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121926
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	327598
Inspection dates	29–30 January 2009
Reporting inspector	John Horwood

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)	408
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	Harvie Hughes
Headteacher	Marianne Oakes
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Acre Lane Spring Park Northampton NN2 8DF
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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 larger than average primary school, serving an area of mainly private housing in the northern suburbs of Northampton. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is for 49 full-time children in two Reception classes. There are few pupils from minority ethnic groups and very few speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is currently below the national average. Pupil mobility is low. A private provider runs an after-school club within the school. The school has achieved the National Healthy Schools award. There have been several changes to the teaching staff and to the leadership team in the past year.

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 school. Parental views were typified by one comment which said, 'Management is good and the overall care and support given to children is excellent.' Pupils enjoy school because teachers make lessons fun and everyone gets on so well together.

The senior leadership team has a clear commitment to raising standards. Leadership and management are good. Success in improving teaching and raising pupils' progress contributes to the school's good capacity to improve further. Governors carry out their statutory duties and are becoming more involved with the work of the school. They are aware of the strengths and areas of development for the school. The contribution the school makes to community cohesion is good. It is based on the principle of supporting every pupil to develop a good and caring understanding of the world they live in. An example of this was the visit to a local 'evacuation village' which was followed up by a outstanding literacy lesson when pupils showed how much they had understood about many aspects of life so different to theirs. Pupils have a good awareness of other faiths and cultures in Britain and the wider world, through the curriculum content which compensates well for the limited ethnic mix within the school.

Children enter school with skills and abilities at expected levels. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is good but the recently developed outside learning area is not yet adequately used to provide all-weather learning opportunities. Across the whole school, each pupil is supported well and all pupils are given equal opportunities to make good progress in their academic and personal skills. In recent years, variations in teaching within Key Stage 2 resulted in satisfactory progress, leading to broadly average standards. Teaching is now consistently good and often outstanding. Challenging targets are set, with pupils on track to reach above average standards. As a result of the leaders' focus on equality, there are no variations in the progress made by any groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils make similar progress in English, mathematics and science.

Teachers are knowledgeable and skilled at making the lessons enjoyable within a supportive and caring environment. Work matches the needs of all pupils because teachers know the pupils well. In the upper year groups, improved progress has resulted from pupils being grouped with those of similar abilities in literacy and numeracy. Until this year, there has not been a secure knowledge of pupils' progress because of weak assessment systems. Improved systems are now in place, although not yet used consistently across the school. In many classes, but not all, the use of target setting is highly developed, with pupils keen to reach and exceed their targets. All the pupils spoken to were fully aware of their targets. The marking of pupils' work is regular and tells pupils what they need to do to improve. Often there is a written pupil's response to the comments. They are not always given enough opportunities to mark their own work and to be responsible for judging their own progress. The curriculum engages pupils through interesting and enjoyable activities. A good range of extra-curricular activities enriches pupils' learning and personal development.

Pastoral care is good and safeguarding requirements, including internet security, are met fully. The school's strong links with external agencies ensure good support for pupils who find learning difficult for whatever reason. Strong links with the secondary school help the older pupils when they move between the schools.

Relationships are very good throughout the school. Pupils behave well, their enjoyment is outstanding and they know how to keep themselves safe. Attendance is consistently above

the national average. Pupils make a good contribution to the community, eat healthily and take part in sport with enthusiasm. The skills they acquire, as well as their good personal development, ensure they are satisfactorily prepared for their future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Foundation Stage with a wide range of skills but overall these are in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress and, by the end of their Reception year, most reach the standards expected for their age and a few exceed them. This is due to the good teaching and good personal support children receive and the well-planned and challenging activities the adults provide for them.

Children settle into their new surroundings quickly and happily as a result of a good induction programme and good links with pre-school settings. There are good links with parents, who appreciate the regular information they receive. Children work together well and behave well. They thrive in a caring, supportive and well-organised environment. There is a buzz of excitement in the classrooms and children greatly enjoy the challenge of a wide variety of stimulating activities, whether teacher-led or those they choose for themselves. Recently introduced daily sessions focusing on letters and sounds help to boost their early reading and writing skills well.

Leadership and management are good. The new arrangements for assessment, monitoring, tracking and setting targets for children enable staff to accurately assess children's skills. This information is used well to plan activities which are well matched to children's abilities and enable them to make good progress. Leaders have correctly identified that the outdoor area needs to be developed to provide the children with more challenging activities to develop all areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide broader opportunities for pupils to assess their own work in order to improve progress.
- Ensure assessment systems are used consistently to enable reliable and accurate data to be available to track progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage improve the use of the recently developed outside learning area.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils generally enter Year 1 with standards close to the national average and make good progress to be above average by the end of Year 2. Standards are similar in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2008, girls reached higher standards than boys when compared to results from all schools but this appears to be a feature of that year group and is not typical across years. For several years, the progress in Key Stage 2 has been falling, although standards reached were still broadly average. All year groups are now making at least good progress as teaching is now better and there is not a frequent change of teacher. The current Year 6 are expected to reach above average standards as they are on track to reach their challenging targets. All groups of pupils are making equal progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress in lessons because of good support by teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through their good behaviour and respect for others, pupils show they know right from wrong. Pupils' enjoyment is outstanding and this is demonstrated in their great enthusiasm for all aspects of school life and their good attendance. They like the variety of exciting work and their teachers, whom they say are 'kind and supportive'. Pupils' comments included: 'There are lots of good surprises waiting for you in the lessons' and 'You learn new things every day.' Pupils know how to keep safe and move sensibly around the school. Pupils know who to talk to if they have any problems. They eat healthily during the day and are aware of what choices they should make. This has contributed to the school being awarded Healthy School status. Children make a good contribution to the school and wider community. In school, they take responsibilities such as house captains and school councillors seriously. They take part in many activities to raise money for charities. Their social skills and standards in literacy and numeracy skills prepare them satisfactorily for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Within overall good teaching, there is some outstanding practice that promotes learning at a rapid pace. Teachers' good subject knowledge and passion for teaching generates tremendous enthusiasm and enjoyment from the pupils. Work is well matched to pupils' abilities, although in the past this has been more based on teachers' good knowledge of the pupils rather than on secure data. Although not yet fully embedded, teachers are approaching the use of the new assessment systems with enthusiasm and this is already evident in much of the planning. They make lessons interesting and fun. Often this is achieved by the effective use of clear and challenging timescales for activities. Learning objectives are shared with pupils who all know what levels they are working at and what their targets are. Teaching assistants provide good support for those who need additional help. Not all lessons include opportunities for pupils to be actively involved in assessing their own work in order to help them make more progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well matched to the wide range of learners' capabilities and is responsive to their needs. It is still being reviewed as more secure assessment data is now available. It promotes enjoyment and achievement for every child, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a focus on making the subjects come alive through regular visitors to the school, visits out and through hands on experiences. Theme days excite the pupils and enable them to work collaboratively on special projects. Opportunities to contribute to the school, for example working on a project to enhance the courtyard, have been successful in giving all pupils a sense of achievement. The curriculum gives good guidance on how to stay safe and keep healthy. There is a wide range of enrichment activities covering sport, music and other areas such as cookery. These are all well attended and pupils say they are greatly enjoyed because everyone can take part.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care of pupils is good, with strong links with external agencies to help ensure pupils are supported well. Child protection procedures are securely in place. Health and safety requirements are met. There are good systems for managing behaviour and monitoring attendance. Staff know pupils well and all pupils feel valued. All staff work well to promote inclusion and pupils say 'Everyone has friends here, it's so easy to fit in.' Pupils who need extra help are effectively provided for and make good progress. Academic guidance is good. Target setting and the use of marking to give pupils advice on how to improve is very well established. While some pupils have regular opportunities to be involved in assessing their own work, this is inconsistent across the school. Assessment is appropriately used at the end of lessons to revise planning where necessary. Pupils say that being given targets in their work, which are then referred to in lessons, books and teaching, are very helpful in showing them what to learn next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The current leadership team have a good mix of experience, enthusiasm and dedication. The team has been strengthened and all have a common vision of improving the school to give pupils the best opportunities. Leaders have had a good impact on developing the school through improving teaching and introducing a better assessment system. The school development plan is focused on raising attainment, and challenging targets are set. The self-evaluation is good and the leadership team has acted quickly to improve the teaching in areas where it was weak. While community cohesion is good, the leaders are currently carrying out an audit of the provision to see where it can be improved.

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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 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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	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	1
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	3

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	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**

2 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitehills Primary School, Northampton NN2 8DF

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and seeing how your school is helping you learn. We were impressed by your enthusiasm for learning and how polite you were to visitors.

Your school is providing you with a good education and it is ensuring that you make good progress in your work. These are some of the good things about your school.

- The enjoyment you show at being in the school is outstanding.
- The staff care about you and look after you well.
- Relationships throughout the school are very good.
- Your behaviour is good ensuring you can all make progress.
- You have developed good social skills.
- Teaching and learning are good and you reach expected standards.
- There is a good range of clubs and after-school activities.
- Your headteacher and staff are working hard to improve your learning further.

In order to improve the school further, we have asked the headteacher to do the following:

- provide more opportunities for you to assess your own work in order to improve progress
- ensure assessment systems are used consistently to help teachers check your progress
- improve the use of the recently developed outside learning area for the Reception classes.

You can help the school by continuing to work hard. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

John Horwood Lead inspector