

Whitnash Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125560
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	328358
Inspection date	6 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

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)	112
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	Adam Humphrey
Headteacher	Elizabeth Stanley
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Langley Road Whitnash Leamington Spa CV31 2EX
Telephone number	01926 426773
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller in size than other primary schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than typically found. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds although about 20% of pupils belong to minority ethnic groups, the largest of which is pupils of Asian or Asian British-Indian heritage. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Nearly a quarter of all pupils have joined or left the school other than at the usual times of the year. The school has one Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The headteacher returned to the school in September 2008 after a period of long-term illness.

There is a privately managed pre-school on site, Little Willows Pre-school, which is inspected separately and receives a separate report.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Whitnash Primary is a satisfactory school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of its work and have great confidence in the headteacher, as one wrote, 'My children have all learnt well at Whitnash and have thoroughly enjoyed the school.' The school is satisfactorily led and managed. The headteacher has worked tenaciously since her return to school after a period of extended absence to regain the momentum of improvement which was evident before she left. She has energised and empowered the many new teaching staff who know what is expected of them and feel confident that they are part of a successful future. However, the roles and responsibilities of the governing body have not been developed well enough for governors to be able to fully support and challenge school leaders.

Most pupils enjoy being at Whitnash, although many are compliant rather than eager learners. They feel safe and have a satisfactory understanding of how to stay healthy. Pupils' satisfactory progress in their basic skills makes them soundly prepared for the next phase of their education and beyond. The satisfactory curriculum encourages pupils to work hard in English and mathematics. Although the school is developing more meaningful links between subjects so that pupils can practise writing skills more regularly, these opportunities are not extensive enough to increase progress. Pastoral care is good and secure partnerships with outside agencies ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils are well met. Although pupils from all backgrounds work and play together well, their awareness of different cultures in the diverse society in which we live is less well developed than it should be. This is because the school has not fully evaluated how well it meets its requirements to promote community cohesion.

When pupils start school in the Reception class their levels of knowledge and skills are below expectations. They make satisfactory progress and enter Year 1 with levels of skills and knowledge that are below those expected of their age. Standards at the end of Year 6 are below average and this represents satisfactory achievement overall. Inspectors agree with the views of some parents who feel that progress is not fast enough in Years 5 and 6. Satisfactory teaching and learning means that pupils' progress is satisfactory. The proportion of good teaching is higher in Years 2 and 3 where teachers pay particularly close attention to ensuring that the needs of all, especially high attaining pupils, are met. Here, pupils' progress is faster and many make good progress. The school provides well for the very high numbers of pupils new to the school, those learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, they make progress similar to other pupils. Standards in science remain very low because of insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils and not enough science investigations or reinforcement of scientific language in lessons.

There are two key reasons why pupils make satisfactory rather than good or better progress. First, although the school makes effective use of its assessment information to track pupils' progress as they move through the school, targets set for individuals are not linked to National Curriculum levels. As a consequence, pupils do not know what they need to do to reach the next level. Second, the good and sometimes outstanding teaching in the school is not identified sufficiently and shared to ensure that pupil progress becomes consistently good throughout the school. In particular, teachers do not always use assessment information well enough to help plan activities to match the needs and abilities of all pupils. Consequently, work set does not always stretch pupils, so that far fewer pupils than average gain the higher levels in national tests.

The headteacher is doing the right things to tackle the school's weaknesses. However, management responsibilities are distributed unevenly and the headteacher's tenacious attempts to improve standards have not been fully harnessed by other senior leaders and governors. Consequently, improvement since the last inspection and the school's capacity to further improve are satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Across the Early Years Foundation Stage, the children's welfare is of paramount importance to the staff. Consequently, children settle quickly into school routines and are happy learners. Children's attainment on entry to Reception is below that expected nationally, especially in communication, language and literacy, and in personal, social and emotional development. Their progress is satisfactory because teaching, learning, leadership and management are satisfactory. The care provided by adults is good and helps children to feel secure and confident. The well-resourced indoor environment ensures that all areas of learning are covered adequately. Imaginative use is made of the outdoor area to foster children's clambering and climbing skills. The classroom is stimulating and whilst activities are carefully planned, opportunities to develop the children's language through dialogue are sometimes missed and this limits their progress. Children's progress is sometimes restricted because some work set for them and some activities around the classroom are not matched closely enough to their needs. Consequently, opportunities are missed to extend children's language and mathematical skills and these remain below average when children start Year 1. The Early Years Foundation Stage is led satisfactorily. The coordinator has a clear view about what needs to be achieved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science by providing more challenge and investigation work, and developing science language skills.
- Ensure that more lessons are of the quality of the best by making sure that all teachers plan to meet the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly higher attainers.
- Make use of assessment information to set targets that are linked to National Curriculum levels and inform pupils about what they need to do to reach them.
- Ensure that governors are involved and knowledgeable about the life of the school and so are better able to hold leaders to account for their work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged 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

Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2008 were below average overall and were exceptionally low in science. Standards have been rising slowly in English and mathematics over the past five years, but remain static overall in science. However, within this slowly rising trend, standards fluctuate year-on-year in this small school, reflecting changes in the proportions of pupils who join with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or whose previous attainment had been very low. Pupils' work seen by inspectors and classroom observations confirms that current standards are below average overall.

Given that pupils' standards are below expected levels when they join the school, they make satisfactory progress overall. The school takes care to ensure that the high number of pupils who join the school at intermittent times during the year quickly settle into school routines and so their progress is similar to that of others in the school. Pupils' progress is faster in Years 2 and 3 where teaching is particularly effective. Recently introduced systems for checking the progress pupils make, and taking action to give support to pupils when needed, have resulted in faster progress for pupils currently in Years 5 and 6. There is very little difference in the progress made by the various groups of pupils in the school. This is because the school works effectively to support groups, such as pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' moral awareness benefits from visitors from a local church. A new child, reflecting on starting at the school said, 'No one is mean to you when you start.' Pupils say that bullying and racial incidents are rare but are dealt with promptly and effectively. They are confident that if difficulties arise their teachers will help because they are 'really good at sorting out problems'. Most pupils behave well in class, but a significant minority are inattentive in lessons and sometimes interrupt the learning of others through inappropriate behaviour. Through their work in personal, social, health and citizenship education, pupils become increasingly aware of their responsibilities to themselves and others. They willingly take on roles such as school councillors and monitors. These opportunities enable them to develop well as responsible members of the school community. Their contribution to and involvement in the life of their local community is more limited. Most pupils have good attitudes to learning but are often passive in lessons and do not show great eagerness to answer questions or to 'join in'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers are knowledgeable and classrooms are well ordered and calm. Lessons are typified by good relationships, mutual respect, humour and warmth. Teachers are good at telling pupils exactly what they are expected to do in lessons and this helps them make sense of their learning. Teaching assistants are well prepared and contribute well to the learning of the individuals they work with. In most lessons, pupils experience a range of approaches and this helps to sustain their interest. However, teachers often talk for too long which restricts the opportunities pupils have to take a more active part in lessons. Assessment information is not used well enough in all lessons to plan activities to meet pupils' different needs effectively. As a result, pupils are sometimes given activities that are either not challenging enough or too hard, and their learning is then restricted.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum enables pupils to make steady progress in developing basic skills. There is good provision for the core skills of numeracy, literacy, and information and communication technology. Senior leaders are working hard to improve the curriculum and are aware that there are still not enough opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects and that this has a

negative impact on the speed at which writing skills can improve. Whilst there is some good practice developing whereby meaningful links are made between different subjects, this is not consistently embedded in all classes. Consequently, there are insufficient opportunities provided for pupils to investigate or research topics themselves. A good range of visits and visitors enhances pupils' enjoyment of learning. Good use is made of outside providers to extend the range of sports provided and to provide an after-school club. However, the range of creative and educational activities outside the normal school day is limited and so makes an insufficient contribution to pupils' learning, their levels of enjoyment and their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are firmly in place and are effective. The school works closely with external agencies and parents to help support vulnerable pupils. Consequently, pupils feel safe at school and report that members of staff deal with any concerns they have to their satisfaction. There are satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' progress. However, inconsistencies in the way teachers set targets and mark work limit their effectiveness in helping pupils understand how to improve. For instance, targets are not linked to the National Curriculum and too little guidance is given to pupils as to how they can reach higher levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified swiftly, and clear targets are set in their individual education plans.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has brought fresh ideas to the school since her return to work and she is moving the school forward. There is an accurate, clear awareness that despite recent improvements, progress in Years 4 to 6 still needs to be faster. There are satisfactory systems for finding out how well the school is doing. The monitoring of teaching by the headteacher is thorough and gives a clear picture of what is going well and what needs improving. The use of performance data to check pupils' progress, although satisfactory, is less well established. Until recently, the school had too little information about how well pupils were doing from term to term. This newly gathered information is not used rigorously enough to identify where progress is too slow so that any potential underachievement can be tackled quickly. Leaders have created a school that is a harmonious environment, in which pupils of all races and cultures get on well together. However, because the extent to which pupils are encouraged to work in the community with others from different ethnic groups is limited, community cohesion is not well enough developed and is satisfactory. Individual governors have not fully involved themselves in the life and work of the school and have an incomplete picture of how well the school is doing. Consequently, the governing body does not always act as a critical friend by asking the searching questions needed to hold the school sufficiently to account.

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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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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**

7 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitnash Primary School, Leamington Spa, CV31 2EX

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We greatly enjoyed meeting you. I would like to say a special thank you to the school council and those of you from Years 5 and 6 who gave up part of your lunchtime in order to meet us. At the moment, we judge that your school is a satisfactory school. This means that we found some good things in the school but also some things that need improving. These are the good things that we found out about your school.

- You get on well with your fellow pupils and with your teachers. Whitnash is a well ordered school and you look after each other well.
- In school, you feel safe and know there are people to whom you can turn with worries or concerns.
- Your headteacher is working hard to make it a better school for you.

There are a number of important things that your school needs to do to help it get better for you. We have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do the following.

- Ensure that all of your lessons are as good as the best by making sure that when teachers plan work for you, it is not too easy or too hard, but just right for you.
- When teachers set targets for you, they need to make sure you all know them and what you need to do to reach them.
- Make sure you reach higher standards in science.
- Involve the school governors more in the life of the school so they can play a bigger part in helping the school get better.

Thank you once again for making such a helpful contribution to the inspection. We enjoyed watching you learn.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant

Lead inspector