

Whytemead First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125861
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	328413
Inspection date	21 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	223
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	60
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John O'Hara
Headteacher	Candida Reece
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Dominion Road Worthing BN14 8LH
Telephone number	01903 202639
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Age group	4–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: The progress children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the quality of pupils' writing skills, and how well the school uses self-evaluation to judge its effectiveness. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, looking at pupils' work and school documents. An analysis of parents' questionnaires and discussions with pupils, the chair and vice chair of governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but evidence gathered suggests that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, are accurate in nearly all respects, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than average. The school has provision for the EYFS in two Reception classes. When children enter the school, they have attainment levels which are below those typically found for their age. These levels have been declining since the last inspection. There are a very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has a number of awards reflecting its commitment to healthy living and promoting environmental awareness.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Whytemead is a good school. It has outstanding aspects to its work such as the care and guidance that is provided so that the pupils' personal development is excellent. It has the enthusiastic support of parents. One view was typical of many, 'I have always felt very welcome into the school and my child really enjoys coming.'

The headteacher and senior staff provide excellent direction to the work of the school and the school's vision is well known to pupils, staff, governors and parents. Senior staff have continued to seek improvement since the last inspection and new ideas are considered carefully to make sure that pupils benefit from these initiatives. This approach is based on good teamwork. Not surprisingly, leadership and management of the school are good. Governors support the school well and have enjoyed testing out the school's vision by visiting the school. In walking around and taking pictures, they identified how this was being carried out in practice. Nevertheless, their focus on what aspects can be improved further, alongside aspects of monitoring by senior staff, is not always sharp enough to stimulate further improvement. For example, lesson observations by staff do not always focus closely enough on the learning taking place. This means that the school's self-evaluation, while generally informative, is overly generous in some aspects so further improvements are harder to spot. However, given the general track record of developments in the school, there is a good capacity to improve further. Reflecting the school's excellent partnership with the local community, nearly all parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were very supportive of all that the school does.

It is the good quality of provision from the EYFS to Year 3 that enables pupils to thrive. The typically good teaching uses a wide range of approaches to make sure that all pupils can succeed. A focus on writing this year has been effective and approaches to teaching letter sounds from Reception to Year 2 are paying dividends in terms of improving pupils' written work. For example, pupils write enthusiastically and imaginatively in recreating eyewitness accounts of famous events in history. This approach has been particularly effective in encouraging the boys to write. The quality of pupils' mathematical work is also above average and evidence from a recent 'maths' week indicates they experience and know about a wide range of mathematical concepts. Pupils readily recall the work they do, aided by the hands-on approach adopted for lessons. This quality of teaching helps pupils achieve well. As a result, they reach above average standards by the time they reach Year 2. By the time they leave a year later, these above average standards are maintained and mathematics work in particular has remained at above average levels for some time. A regular 'maths' week helps maintain the profile of mathematics and motivates pupils' learning. They also achieve well in other subjects such as science, history and art. Although teaching is typically good, there are occasions when some activities could be planned with a bit more 'spice' to enliven learning further, or to challenge pupils to think even more about how they can tackle or improve their work. Pupils' confident levels of basic skills, along with their high levels of self-esteem, set them up very well for their next school.

The curriculum is enjoyable for pupils and the themed approach which links subjects together provides pupils with a varied and interesting diet of activities over the year. Displays around the school reflect the broad nature of their studies and the curriculum is enriched by a number of after school clubs which extend class activities well. Learning Italian also helps to extend pupils' horizons and skills. A 'one world week' held annually raises pupils' awareness of other countries well and the curriculum overall gives pupils a good understanding of different cultures and beliefs. However, this is not yet supported by direct contacts with schools or people

elsewhere in the United Kingdom or abroad. The curriculum promotes a good basis for pupils to work independently, work with others and put forward ideas. In the Reception classes, there is a broad range of activities for children to follow, many that encourage their physical and social skills. Some activities, however, can be too predictable or are not open ended enough to allow children to extend their creativity and learning.

Ongoing checks on individual pupil's progress mean that teachers know what the next steps in learning are for all. The excellent care and guidance pupils receive extends to new arrivals that join the school during the year. This ensures that they too make good progress. Pupils have a well developed understanding of their targets devised by the teachers, although pupils tend to have a better knowledge of their behavioural rather than academic targets.

Nearly all aspects of pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, with the exception of some aspects of their knowledge of healthy lifestyles and adopting safe practices. Pupils talk about all the healthy exercise they do and are active at playtimes to the point of encouraging the inspectors to join in! Many happily take advantage of the 'fruit bar' available at morning playtimes, and many have a good understanding of foods that are best to eat. Pupils have an excellent sense of involvement in their local community, such as local dance festivals, church services, environmental working groups and close academic and social links with other schools. The school council is well thought of by fellow pupils and suggests good ideas. Pupils raise money for charities such as 'denim for diabetes', and in poppy selling. Pupils rise to the recognition of being 'Whytemead heroes' and others know that their 'golden' rules are there to help everyone enjoy school to the full. As a result of their excellent spiritual, social and moral development, they behave brilliantly and really enjoy school. It also ensures their excellent behaviour in class extends to the playground and reflects their very polite attitudes to others. Children who have specific learning needs are cared for exceptionally well so they make excellent progress. Their 'dinosaur' school activity programme means they are fully motivated to receive the extra help they need. Professionals beyond the school are also used very well in this respect to provide additional support. Pupils speak highly of their teachers and staff and say they 'love' being at school and like 'learning stuff', a comment confirmed by many parents. Not surprisingly, they enjoy attending and the school's efforts to raise pupils' attendance levels in recent years has worked. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are robust and well implemented. Pupils report that they cannot recall when there was any bullying, but know that the school will respond quickly if it arises.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children have a good start and settle in quickly to the routines set for them. They achieve well in most areas and reach age expected levels by the time they start in Year 1. The leadership of the EYFS is good and nearly all parents welcome the care taken to make the children's start to school so trouble free. Teaching is typically good. There is a good focus on developing children's social skills and they interact well with each other. A strong focus on developing children's number and simple word building skills ensures they make good progress in these areas. However, the school recognises that developing their language skills has scope for improvement, despite its high profile within planning and teaching. Their independent skills develop well although adult helpers sometimes miss opportunities to extend children's learning further. At other times, activities could also be more opened ended to foster and stimulate their creative abilities, although the breadth of activities children have is good. The balance of activities that children choose to follow and those planned by the teacher is clearly thought through and appropriate.

Welfare arrangements for children are excellent and close links with local playgroups and Nurseries mean that a clear picture of each child's background and potential emerges. Outside activities motivate the children, who enjoy being pirates on their ship or in pretending to be living in the 'seven dwarfs' home. They know the simple rules about using their equipment and treat it carefully.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give the children in Reception classes more frequent help when working in small groups or alone to help them make even quicker progress.
- Ensure that monitoring by senior leaders and governors is sharper in pinpointing those areas, particularly in lessons, which can help the school improve even more.

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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?	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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
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	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	1

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	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	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	1

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?	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	1
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**

22 October 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Whytemead First School, Worthing, BN14 8LH

I am writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection we carried out recently. We really enjoyed visiting you. We think your school is good. It has some excellent features. Your parents and carers agree with us that Whytemead is a caring and welcoming place.

- Here are some of the things we found out:
- You reach above average standards in lots of your work, particularly your mathematics; your writing has improved too. Well done!
- The children in the Reception classes make good progress and have lots of fun, but could sometimes do with extra help when working on their own.
- Your behaviour is excellent and we enjoyed hearing about your 'heroes' that you choose.
- The range of things you get to do is good and we enjoyed looking at the work you do; the work you did on your mathematics and dungeons and dragons projects looked especially good.
- The school really makes sure you are very safe and really well cared for; you know the targets your teachers set for you and this helps you improve your work.
- Your links with the local community are excellent, although you could get to know pupils in other schools a lot further away from Worthing.
- The teaching is good and teachers really help you to work together well; I hope Year 3's trip to Arundel Castle was fun.
- We have asked the school to do a couple of things to help it improve further:
- Give the children in Reception classes more frequent help when working in small groups or alone to help them make even quicker progress.
- Although the school is really good already, help the staff and governors to be better at spotting those things that can improve even more.

You can help your teachers by continuing to be well behaved and nice to your friends, so that your school can be even better. Well done.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge Lead inspector