

Whitmore Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100245
Local Authority	Hackney
Inspection number	335510
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Carole Skinner

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr L Woode
Headteacher	Mr A Howe
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2006
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons, and held meetings with staff, pupils and a representative of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation, samples of pupils' work, assessment records, the school's analysis of progress of different groups of pupils and attendance records.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- How effectively the school is raising achievement for pupils in Years 3 to 6, especially in English and mathematics, and eliminating variations in attainment and achievement between different groups of pupils.
- The effectiveness of strategies to improve teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- How effectively teachers and school leaders use assessment information to ensure individual needs are met and expectations are high.
- The extent to which leaders, manager and governors are evaluating the school's performance and taking effective action to eliminate underachievement.

Information about the school

Larger than the average primary school, Whitmore draws its pupils mainly from the local area. A very large majority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and most speak a home language other than English, Turkish being the predominant mother tongue. Just under a third of the pupils are at an early stage of learning English, and many join the school unable to speak English at all. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The school has a high proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs, ten of whom are taught in the Autism Resource Provision as well as being integrated into mainstream classes. Just under half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is much higher than average. The school has a high turnover of pupils, especially between Years 3 and 6. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery and Reception. At the time of this inspection there was only one Reception class; a second class accepts children from the start of the spring term. Since the last inspection, the school has had a high turnover of staff, including senior leaders. It has had to reorganise classes because of a falling roll, creating three mixed-age classes from September 2009. In addition, from the beginning of the autumn term 2009, the school has provided accommodation for approximately 150 pupils from a neighbouring school which was destroyed by fire during the summer holidays. The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club. It has achieved the Activemark, Bronze Eco-Schools Award and International Schools Award (Foundation Level).

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Whitmore provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It has a number of good features and is rapidly improving under the leadership of the experienced and committed senior team. The headteacher is the first to admit that, since he took over the reins, progress has been inhibited by a number of major challenges, particularly falling numbers and the need to reorganise classes and reduce staffing. He has led the school through a difficult patch with drive and determination and has successfully created a staff team that shares his vision and aspirations for the school. Attainment in Year 6 remains low as the school strives to eradicate the legacy of underachievement that has resulted from past weaknesses in, and disruptions to, teaching. Nevertheless it is improving strongly, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, where progress is good. The new strategies for teaching letters, sounds and number knowledge are paying dividends here.

Attainment in Years 3 to 6 is also showing marked improvement and is now close to age expectations in Years 3 and 4, but progress is inconsistent. It is stronger in reading than in writing and mathematics, and there are still a few inconsistencies between classes and year groups. Pupils' weak language skills and limited vocabulary are key factors where attainment is low. Pupils with statements of special educational needs and others who receive focused additional support make good progress. The more able pupils and others, without individual support, who find learning more difficult do not always make as much progress as they could.

The school's greatest strength is the way it helps pupils to grow into confident, happy and independent young people who value and respect each other's differences. Excellent relationships and good behaviour help to create an oasis of calm where pupils feel very safe and well cared for. The school is a harmonious community where pupils from many different ethnic backgrounds get on well together. The exciting curriculum, greatly enriched by good partnerships with a wealth of local organisations, is helping to raise attainment and is a key reason why pupils enjoy school so much.

The proportion of good teaching is steadily improving and this is accelerating pupils' progress rapidly. Where inconsistencies remain, teachers do not use assessment information rigorously enough to fine-tune their planning so that lessons provide exactly the right amount of challenge for all groups of pupils, particularly the most able and a few pupils who find learning difficult. Assessment procedures are much improved, particularly marking, but are not yet consistently applied across the school. Pupils are gradually becoming more involved in checking their own progress towards individual targets, but this is at an early stage of development.

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Governors have provided valuable support to the headteacher in tackling staffing, premises and budgetary issues. The role of all the governors in monitoring the school's performance and evaluating its effectiveness has been more limited. Senior and middle leaders have robust systems for evaluating the impact of provision on the outcomes for pupils. They know exactly what needs to be improved and their track record of improvements in teaching and in raising attainment in the face of difficult challenges testifies to their good capacity for continuing improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress in writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 6, by:
 - intensifying the focus on developing pupils' language skills and extending their vocabulary
 - making sure that the more able pupils are always given suitably challenging work
 - ensuring that the few pupils without individual support who find learning more difficult are given tasks matched to their needs.
- Raise the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good by:
 - making sharper use of day-to-day assessment to plan activities that build effectively on each pupil's previous learning
 - involving pupils more productively in checking their own progress towards their targets and in assessing how well they have done in lessons.
 - Involve all governors more productively in evaluating the school's performance and challenging it to raise pupils' attainment.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils made at least satisfactory progress in all of the lessons seen and, in many, progress was good. Pupils taught in the Autism Resource Provision make good progress against the targets of their individual education plans. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is unmistakable and their positive attitudes lead to good progress when the teaching is stimulating, interesting and geared to their individual needs. Year 2 pupils eagerly sounded out letters to make words and tried hard to use this knowledge to spell the words correctly. Their writing shows that they have already made good progress in learning how to structure sentences and use interesting descriptive words. In several lessons in Years 3 to 6, pupils' speaking and listening skills were extended by discussing their ideas with a 'talk partner'. In a few lessons, pupils learn at too slow a pace because they spend too long listening to the teacher and not enough time practising and extending their skills. Occasionally, more able pupils find tasks too easy and are not extended sufficiently in their thinking.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their very low starting points. Progress

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in reading has shown a marked improvement in response to new teaching methods. Attainment in writing and mathematics is beginning to rise as new initiatives are implemented. In many cases, pupils' attainment is limited by their grasp of more complex language, particularly when interpreting texts and mathematical questions. The most recent assessments show a strong trend of improvement in Years 3 and 4, and data show that the previous Year 6 made up a lot of lost ground during their final year, especially in reading.

Pupils' good moral and social development is reflected in their generally sensible behaviour and the way in which they discuss issues such as friendship. Their spiritual awareness is less well developed. Pupils show initiative and take responsibility as prefects, school councillors and 'playground friends'. They appreciate and celebrate the many different cultures represented within the school and the local community. They show concern for others through charity fundraising. Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are enhanced by working with adults from city firms who help to improve their reading and mathematics skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The school provides a safe and caring environment where pupils receive high levels of care and good support. Teachers create a warm, welcoming and colourful environment for the pupils, making the most of an old building that is not best suited to 21st century teaching methods. Rigorous action to reduce absences has successfully raised attendance and efforts continue to improve it further. The learning mentor provides valuable support for vulnerable pupils and those at risk of exclusion. The school has robust systems for tackling bullying and disruptive behaviour. Pupils enjoy a nutritious start to the day at the breakfast club and participate enthusiastically in a good range of activities at the after-school club.

Most lessons are well planned with different tasks for each group of pupils that build on previous learning. The introduction of setting by ability in Years 4 to 6 has helped teachers to match activities more closely to pupils' levels of attainment. Teachers' marking clearly shows pupils how well they have done and what they need to do next. The best examples evaluate pupils' progress towards their individual targets or in relation to the objectives of the lesson but this is not yet a consistent feature. Pupils are not always given the chance to check their own progress during a lesson or identify what they need to do to reach the next level of attainment.

Skilled teachers and support staff ensure good provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs, both in the Autism Resource Base and in mainstream classes. In many lessons, teaching assistants provide good support for pupils, helping them to understand new ideas and acquire new skills. On other occasions, they do not develop learning well enough through open-ended questions or explanations. Good support for pupils who do not speak English at home, particularly from bilingual staff, enables them to settle quickly and learn the language they need in order to progress in learning.

Effective links between subjects around central topics and themes have made the curriculum more relevant and motivational for pupils. New schemes for teaching literacy, numeracy and science are accelerating progress but their full impact on attainment has yet to work through to Year 6. The creative arts are given high priority, including opportunities for pupils to work alongside artists and writers. Pupils benefited greatly from the recent Hoxton Starlit literary festival and the Year 6 residential visit to the 'Farm for City Children' in Wales. The school's ethnic and cultural diversity is reflected well in events such as African drumming and dance, Black History Month and Turkish and Kurdish Cypriot Week.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

Experienced senior leaders have brought a wealth of expertise to the school that is driving improvements, especially in assessment and in the provision for pupils with a wide range of additional needs. The subject leaders for English and mathematics play a key role in developing good practice. Senior leaders have been thorough in eliminating the weakest teaching. They provide good support and training for teachers who are new to the school and to the profession. There is a shared ambition which is a good basis for taking the school forward and raising standards. Governors support the headteacher and staff well and have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A core group of governors visit the school to gain first-hand experience of how well it is doing, but others are not sufficiently involved in evaluating its performance in order to challenge and hold the school to account. Safeguarding procedures are robust and are regularly updated and monitored.

Productive partnerships with many local organisations, including city law firms and the Shoreditch Trust, enrich pupils' learning and well-being. The school works hard to engage parents and carers in supporting their children's learning at home. Despite many good initiatives, such as a parent council and 'parent empowerment' classes, it has had limited success. Recently, the school has started communicating with parents by text message and this seems to be improving attendance at events.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is a notable strength. Thorough knowledge of the diverse cultural and ethnic mix of the school and local community underpins this good provision. The Turkish Parent Involvement Officer promotes good relationships while the parent council brings together parents of many different nationalities. Involvement in community events, such as the Shoreditch Dance Festival, and those organised by the school, such as an international food evening and a weekend bike club, do much to encourage good relations. The school is aware that it is less effective in promoting awareness of the different faiths that are represented in the school. A strong commitment to promoting equal opportunity for all pupils is evident in the rigorous analysis of the progress of different groups of pupils. This has led to well-planned interventions to tackle apparent inequalities, for example in successfully raising the attainment of Turkish pupils. The school is currently focusing on particular groups of less able and more able pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision has improved since the last inspection as a result of good leadership and improvements in teaching. Children make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development and in improving their communication, language and literacy skills, all of which are particularly weak when they start school. Children's attainment at the end of the Reception improved significantly in 2007 and 2008 but dipped to below average in 2009, partly because of disruptions in staffing that have now been resolved.

Home visits and meetings with parents help children to feel happy about starting school. Children in both the Nursery and Reception settle in quickly and soon become independent, choosing activities for themselves and playing happily with others. In one session, Nursery children measured ingredients and made dough which they then rolled out, moulded and cut into shapes. Others explored different sized containers, pouring water from one to another, learning the meaning of 'empty' and 'full'. In Reception, some children weighed different fruits and compared them to find out which was heavier while others practised drawing and writing in salt or counted objects and found a matching number. Teachers ask carefully worded questions to develop and assess children's understanding. Teaching assistants are not always clear about what children are expected to learn, especially from the self-chosen activities, so do not always ask the right questions or build spontaneously on children's responses.

Each child's 'learning journey' book contains a useful range of photographs, observations and assessments of their progress. Teachers indicate the next steps in learning for each child and use this information well to plan further learning experiences. Carefully structured teaching of letters and sounds helps children to acquire appropriate reading and writing skills by the time they enter Year 1. They learn to count and recognise numbers and shapes. All adults pay strict attention to ensuring children's good health and safety. They encourage the children to eat fruit and drink water and teach them good hygiene habits. The main shortcoming in the school's provision is the limited and rather lacklustre outside area. Staff make the most of this by providing a variety of activities to promote outdoor learning but it lacks vibrancy and excitement.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Just under one in ten parents responded to the questionnaire, which is a low return. All of these agree that their children enjoy school, that they are kept well informed of their children's progress and that the school is led and managed well. They are happy with the quality of teaching and believe their children are kept safe. A few parents feel that the school does not deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour. Inspectors found that the school has rigorous systems for tackling poor behaviour amongst a very small minority of pupils. A small minority of parents feel their children are not making enough progress. Inspection findings show that pupils are not yet making consistently good progress throughout the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitmore Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 342 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	67	10	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	47	15	50	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	43	16	53	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	30	17	57	3	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	30	20	67	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	37	16	53	2	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	27	19	63	1	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	30	16	53	2	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	30	16	53	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	33	13	43	3	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	30	15	50	2	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	10	33	16	53	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	43	14	47	2	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitmore Primary School, London N1 5JN

Your happy, smiling faces were a delight to see when we visited your school. Thank you for being so friendly and for helping us with our inspection. We really enjoyed talking to you and watching you at work in your lessons. I am writing to let you know some of the things we found out during our visit.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. It is improving all the time. All of the adults look after you very well and help you to grow into confident, independent young people. You behave well and get on very well with each other and with adults. You enjoy taking responsibilities, such as being prefects and helping to improve things through the school council. It is good to see how you look out for each other by being playground friends. We can understand why you enjoy school so much ' you have so many exciting things to do!

Many of you are now making good progress, especially the younger ones, but those of you in Years 3 to 6 make satisfactory progress because you are not always given work that makes you think hard and helps you to move on. Your reading is improving well but you do not do as well in writing and mathematics. This is especially the case for some of you who need extra help with learning and some who are capable of reaching high standards.

We have asked the people who run the school to improve three main things:

- to help you do better in writing and mathematics
- to make sure that you are always given work that helps you make good progress and that you are given opportunities to check your own progress in lessons
- to make sure that the governors help to improve the school quickly by regularly checking how well everything is working.

You can help by continuing to work hard and coming to school every day. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Carole Skinner

Lead inspector

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