

Whitehall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103036
Local Authority	Waltham Forest
Inspection number	336002
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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	435
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon McCormick
Headteacher	Jacquie Holder
Date of previous school inspection	25 March 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 22 lessons involving 16 teachers. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work, the school's improvement plans, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 87 parent and 26 staff questionnaires were received and analysed along with 91 from pupils.

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

- the impact of recent initiatives to raise attainment and accelerate progress, particularly in writing
- how well leaders and managers are improving and maintaining teaching quality in order to secure consistent progress in all year groups
- the strengths in the provision for pupils with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities
- how effectively assessment information is used to meet pupils' needs.

Information about the school

The pupils in this large school are from a wide range of backgrounds. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are higher than in most schools. More pupils than average are eligible for free school meals. Twelve pupils who have hearing problems receive additional support from staff in a local authority specialist unit on the school site. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who hold a statement of special educational needs are above average, some of whom have complex learning, behavioural, emotional, social or physical needs. Many more pupils enter or leave the school part way through their primary education than in most schools. Three classes are taught by temporary teachers due to staff illness and leave. The headteacher joined the school in September 2009. The school runs a breakfast club and there is after-school care run by an external provider.

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

'It's a very warm and welcoming place' is the accurate way one parent described this school. Most other parents and carers indicated that their children enjoy school, and pupils supported this view in their responses to the inspection questionnaire. They show their enjoyment in positive attitudes to learning and school life as a whole. Some parents and carers of pupils who have recently joined the school or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities expressed their appreciation of how well the school has helped their children to settle and of the support for their needs. Whitehall provides a satisfactory education for its pupils, and children get off to a good start in the Reception classes.

Pupils' attainment is in line with national averages and their achievement is satisfactory. They make better progress in reading and numeracy than in writing because changes made to accelerate pupils' reading skills introduced two years ago are having a positive impact. Changed approaches made this year to the teaching of writing are beginning to accelerate progress and raise attainment, particularly for the younger and older year groups. However, pupils still have to make up for lost ground because their progress has not been even through the school. Teaching is satisfactory overall and the school's monitoring shows that the proportion of good teaching is steadily increasing. In the good lessons seen during the inspection, teachers made learning interesting so that pupils wanted to do their best and teachers identified precisely what pupils had to do to succeed. This was not the case in all lessons and sometimes pupils lost concentration because the lesson was slow; introductions were overly long and pupils did not have a long enough time to consolidate their learning by doing things for themselves.

The school is particularly successful in promoting pupils' personal and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils behave well and get along well together, so that little time is wasted managing behaviour. They say that one of the most important things they like about the school is that they enjoy finding out about the many diverse cultures represented in the school community. Good care and guidance enable pupils to feel secure and safe in school because they know that staff will deal with any issues of concern effectively. Pupils spoke warmly of the help they are given in the Nurture Room. They know and understand the important factors involved in being healthy. Many enjoy the opportunities they have to participate in dance and sporting activities, carefully chosen to extend pupils' experiences of different leisure and sports activities. A new strategic and rigorous approach to improving attendance this year has proved successful, although a few pupils have too many absences, impacting negatively on the progress they make. Each day, too many pupils arrive late.

The school has a good capacity for ongoing improvement. The headteacher rapidly

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made an accurate assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses on her arrival. She has established a strongly shared sense of purpose throughout the school and has successfully led initiatives to bring about improvement. For example, greater consistency in the quality of teaching has led to improved attainment in pupils' writing, and attendance has been raised. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly and the information used successfully to provide additional help when an individual is not making the expected rate of progress. Senior staff have identified the most significant priorities to bring about further improvement in pupils' attainment. They have rightly recognised that they could make further use of tracking data to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils to ensure a close match of the programmes put in place to meet their needs and to measure more closely the impact of such interventions. Turbulence in staffing this year has been dealt with well to ensure that there has been minimal disruption to pupils' learning. Staff have the skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to address areas of weakness under the perceptive guidance of the headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching and pupils' learning and progress by:
 - ensuring that all lessons are conducted at a suitable pace to engage pupils throughout the whole lesson
 - consolidating the approaches to teaching writing and giving pupils more opportunities to develop and practise their skills.
- Ensure that the school's data is used more extensively to analyse the success of specific programmes designed to boost the performance of different groups of pupils.
- Improve punctuality and raise the attendance of the few pupils who find it difficult to attend regularly.

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

Most pupils enjoy lessons, reflecting that the work planned for them is at the right degree of difficulty to help them to learn new things successfully. Pupils work collaboratively and listen to one another, which helps their learning because they share their thinking and understanding as they talk together. Pupils have a strong sense of fairness, commenting that 'everyone is treated the same.' They behave considerately towards each other and are polite and friendly to adults. Most are keen to do well. Pupils particularly enjoy developing their understanding of global issues and other cultures, for example through the links with a school in Malawi or by celebrating Chinese New Year.

Pupils' attainment has been variable since the last inspection, although it is now broadly in line with national averages, giving them a sound basis for secondary education. A number of disruptions to learning last year, such as staff illness and loss of computers through burglaries, led to disappointing results in the Year 6 national tests, but the school is now on course to bring overall attainment back to previous levels. For

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example, in a Year 6 lesson pupils sharpened their understanding of how to present persuasive arguments when they looked at one another’s letter writing against clear criteria for success, showing that the majority in the class were working above nationally expected levels. Progress has not been even in each class. Closer monitoring of pupils’ progress is enabling underachievement to be picked up and addressed more quickly. Pupils enthusiastically take on responsibilities such as school councillors, lunch monitors, running the fruit tuck shop, playground or reading buddies. Many participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including residential experiences. While pupils participate in some activities beyond the school, such as choral or sports events, the school recognises that there is scope for more opportunities to help pupils to make a greater contribution to the local community.

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	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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?

A rich and varied curriculum makes a major contribution to pupils’ enjoyment of school. Staff make good links between subjects, for example giving them effective opportunities to practise their skills in relevant and real contexts which helps to improve their

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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progress. The curriculum is enriched well through focused visits linked to topics, for example visits to the Golden Hinde or the Tate Gallery provide the context for further work. Teachers plan well together in year teams to make learning interesting, such as in a Year 4 lesson when pupils were using a football scenario to move around the classroom to identify prime numbers, making learning active and motivating. The good teaching observed in a number of lessons is not yet sufficiently established in all classes, so that on occasions learning can be slow and lacking engagement for some pupils which slows their overall progress. Teachers’ marking picks up misunderstandings well and gives pupils a good understanding of the quality of their work and what they have to do to make it better. This is particularly effective when teachers require pupils to respond by indicating that they have taken in the advice or when they have to carry out an additional piece of work to consolidate their understanding.

The school monitors the progress made by each pupil regularly and teachers use the information well to plan for pupils’ individual needs. Teaching assistants make an important contribution to pupils’ learning, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities including those with hearing problems, so that they make progress in line with their peers. The school makes good provision to promote pupils’ personal development and remove barriers to learning for its most vulnerable pupils, giving them a positive platform for learning. However, staff recognise that they do not monitor the impact of this provision closely enough against agreed rates of progress to be sure of which approaches are the most effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders at all levels in the school have high aspirations for pupils. They have galvanised the enthusiasm of staff and are channelling their efforts well to improve attainment. The headteacher has led a programme of monitoring and evaluation effectively to enable staff to have a clear view of the school’s strengths and weaknesses and appropriate measures are being systematically put in place, piece by piece. For example, staff diagnosed why pupils’ writing was weaker than other areas and reintroduced more focused teaching of specific skills. However, the impact of recent developments has yet to be seen fully in pupils’ outcomes. Governors discharge their statutory responsibilities soundly. They are vigilant in ensuring that pupils and staff are safe and that the school has effective arrangements to safeguard pupils. They have reviewed and changed the

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way they gain first-hand knowledge of the challenges that the school faces and are becoming increasingly involved in setting appropriate priorities for improvement and holding the school to account.

Good links with outside agencies, such as the adjacent secondary school and health services contribute strongly to promoting all aspects of pupils’ personal development and support improvement in their learning. This helps to promote equal opportunities, ensuring that there is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils, and attainment gaps are narrowed. Activities such as a programme to improve boys’ writing through the use of computers and additional lessons in mathematics and science for more able pupils help to raise aspirations and attainment. Pupils from different backgrounds get on noticeably well with each other, showing the school’s success in promoting a sense of community. For example, staff help pupils to celebrate both what is common between faith groups such as prayer and holy books and the differences in how they are expressed; pupils themselves act as resident experts in sharing their faith with others. Significant events including the annual European Language Day broaden pupils’ horizons as they ‘travel to other countries’ in different classrooms to share their research about aspects of language, food and culture. Other opportunities, including English lessons for parents, help to build a strong partnership with parents and carers.

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	3
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents and carers of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are unanimously

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positive about their child’s experience in the school. Children enter the Nursery or Reception classes with skills and understanding below those expected for their age. They make good progress, particularly in developing confidence, independence and physical skills, so that they join Year 1 closer to the expected level for their age. Their learning really accelerates in the Reception classes because of the good practice and range of opportunities provided for them. Attention is given to improving children’s communication skills and underpinning their early literacy and numeracy skills through first-hand experiences. Staff provide a stimulating learning environment with plenty of opportunities for children to learn from first-hand experience, for example observing and painting still-life pictures using a wide range of fresh flowers. Staff make good use of assessments to plot children’s progress, but could use these even more effectively to speed up their progress by targeting activities more closely to children’s attainment. Currently the school is addressing the lower quality of resources and outdoor provision for the Nursery classes.

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

Most parents or carers are positive about the school, with some commenting particularly on the effectiveness of the one-to-one support given to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A few indicated that they have concerns that behaviour is not dealt with effectively or that they are not kept informed about their child’s progress and how to support their learning. Inspectors found that both behaviour and behaviour management are good. The school offers a number of formal opportunities for parents and carers to meet with teachers about children’s progress, and provides frequent newsletters and runs workshops on particular aspects of the school’s approaches to teaching basic skills. The school recognises parents’ concern that there has been some disruption to learning through staff changes but has managed these well to ensure that this has been kept to a minimum.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitehall 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 87 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 459 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	53	40	46	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	49	40	46	4	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	44	34	39	8	9	4	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	40	42	48	5	6	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	42	48	39	45	1	1	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	40	42	48	6	7	4	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	40	45	52	5	6	2	2
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)	31	36	39	45	5	6	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	34	47	54	4	5	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	31	42	48	8	9	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	34	38	44	8	9	4	5
The school is led and managed effectively	32	37	44	51	5	6	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	42	48	38	44	4	5	2	2

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.



26 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitehall Primary School, Chingford, E4 6ES

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing your work, and found the information you gave us when you spoke with us very valuable. We want to let you know what we found out.

You are very welcoming to visitors and new pupils to the school. You clearly enjoy school and get on well together. This makes the school a happy place for you all. You behave well and this helps everyone to concentrate in lessons. Teachers take good care of you and plan interesting activities for you. You told us how much this helps you enjoy your learning. You appreciate that adults are always on hand to explain things again if you do not understand. Your targets mean that you have a good understanding of the level of your work. Some of you show that you really understand what to do next to make your work better when you add to your teacher's comments when they mark your work. Adults make sure that the school is a safe place for you.

We have judged that yours is a satisfactory school which is on course to improve further. The standards you reach are average and we have made some suggestions for teachers to consider to help you to do even better:

- make sure that you have enough time in lessons to work independently for a longer period of time to help you to learn to think things through for yourselves, particularly in writing
- check how well you have done when you are on a special programme to make sure that it is meeting your needs.

We know that you will help by continuing to do your best. A few of you do not attend as well as you could and too many of you are late in the morning and can help by coming to school more regularly and on time.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector

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