

Whitehall Nursery and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104163
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	336246
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2010
Reporting inspector	John Earish

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M A Khan
Headteacher	Susan Speed
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2010
School address	West Bromwich Road Walsall WS1 3HS
Telephone number	01922 721991
Fax number	01922 721991
Email address	sspeed@whitehall-i.walsall.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They saw 26 lessons or parts of lessons taught by nine teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. The school's work was observed as well as documentation including the school's planning and information about pupils' progress. The inspectors also talked to governors, pupils and staff in leadership positions. The views of 26 school staff and 52 parents and carers expressed in their responses to questionnaires were also taken into account.

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

- how effectively the school has addressed the issues raised at the previous inspection about raising standards in reading and mathematics
- the strategies for increasing attendance to see if they are effective
- the quality of teaching and learning to see if all groups of pupils are making good progress and achieving well
- the impact of monitoring at all levels, including governors, to see if it is sufficiently rigorous to raise achievement and improve the quality of

Information about the school

Whitehall is larger than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. A large majority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Many children who join the Nursery speak little or no English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly similar to national figures. Their wide range of needs includes physical disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural, language and emotional difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are included in the Nursery and Reception classes. The school has been awarded Healthy School status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Whitehall is a good school. It has maintained the strong features recognised at the last inspection and improved markedly in others. This is because of the outstanding personal leadership of the headteacher who has secured rapid improvements in all areas of the school's work from its low point five years ago when it was given a notice to improve. The very large majority of parents and carers recognise these achievements. This was summed up by one family who wrote, 'We think the improvements in behaviour, morale, attendance, the building, staffing, meals and pride is amazing.' Another parent wrote, 'Full marks to the headteacher for her determination and efforts with the school.' Rigorous appraisal of the school's performance has enabled it to maintain the pace of improvement. The headteacher and her senior staff continue to be methodical at identifying areas where changes are needed so that decisive action can be taken to address any weaknesses. This ensures that all groups of pupils achieve well and enjoy learning. This confirms the school's good capacity to continue improving.

Children quickly become eager learners in the Nursery and Reception classes and make good progress in all areas of their learning for their low starting points. This is an important factor in the school's success and is the firm foundation on which improvements have been built. This good progress is maintained as they move through the school. Pupils reach broadly average levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by age 7 years.

This accelerating progress is due to a number of factors including improvements to the quality of teaching and learning which is of good quality. This is recognised by almost all of the parents and carers responding to the questionnaires. Work is usually well matched to the pupils' varying needs and abilities so they make good progress in a positive learning environment that celebrates achievements. Teaching assistants play an important and pivotal role in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so they are able to play a full part in lessons and also achieve well. As one parent wrote, 'My child has had a lot of help from the school and I feel that they are helping my child very well. It hasn't been easy for all of us but I am feeling happy with the progress being made.' However, on some occasions, teachers miss opportunities for higher-attaining pupils to explore their own ideas or do not give them enough time to do so. This means that their progress is not always quite as rapid as it could be.

Outstanding levels of care and support are another reason for the school's continuing success. Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and feel extremely secure and happy. As a consequence, they enjoy coming to school and behave well. The school's strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles, recognised in its national award, ensures that

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

pupils have a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Pupils work purposefully and productively in lessons, and all are keen to do well and say that targets are helping them improve their work and give them something to aim for. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and local community, and are broadening their horizons through projects such as the links with schools nationally and globally.

Pupils' attendance is broadly average. The school is successfully improving the attendance of a small number of persistent absentees who have often recently arrived from overseas. However, some parents and carers still do not appreciate the importance of their children's regular attendance at school, despite the school's very best efforts to encourage them to do so and the very strict actions taken when absence is unauthorised.

Teachers are working successfully to increase the opportunities for creativity and enjoyment, and are making links between subjects so that learning is purposeful and captures pupils' interest and enthusiasm. For example, teachers are using drama and role play well to inspire reluctant learners and to enthuse those who find learning difficult. However, there are still missed opportunities within this good curriculum to fully exploit opportunities for independent learning.

Governors are very supportive of the school and understand many of its strengths and weaknesses. However, they are at an early stage of devising robust new ways of holding the school to account for its performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers capitalise on opportunities during lessons for pupils, especially the higher attainers, to work independently to explore their own ideas and use their initiative in order to sustain their rapid progress
- Ensure governors are fully involved in holding the school to account for its performance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

All groups of pupils, including the most able, those most vulnerable and those speaking English as an additional language make good progress from their well- below-average starting points. This is because learning is of good quality. Last year, for example, those pupils in Year 2 at an early stage of learning English exceeded the performance of similar groups nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils are very involved in the running of the school and make an excellent contribution to the community. For example, they take on a wide range of leadership roles as members of the Whitehall Parliament, classroom councillors, playground buddies and dining room monitors. A considerable contribution is also made to the wider community and by raising substantial funds for charities.

Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, reflecting the school's Healthy School status. They know what constitutes a healthy diet and the

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

importance of exercise. However, some admit to still liking the occasional burger, chips and fizzy drink!

Pupils are friendly, polite and respectful towards others and really enjoy learning. Children from all backgrounds mix well. Consequently, the school is racially harmonious. As one child said, 'We are all the same but different at the same time' but we really enjoy learning at school.' All in all, pupils' good progress and their ability to work together cooperatively mean they now leave the school satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in learning.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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?

Teachers are good at planning work so that it meets the different needs of pupils within each class. They take time at the beginning of lessons to review previous learning to consolidate new ideas and clarify any misunderstanding. Pupils respond very well to new and imaginative ways of learning. For example, a small group of pupils in Year 2 were imagining they were workers in a Victorian sweet factory packing confectionary. They were told that the number of sweets in each container was incorrect and they had to

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

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

work out how many more sweets were needed. They then had to repack them with the correct number in each tube. The factory owner, the teacher, was a hard task master. He was constantly urging them to work faster and to record their calculations. They quickly completed the task using the four rules of number. Previously, they had great difficulty using and applying these operations but had used them accurately during this activity.

Teachers are good at sharing learning targets with pupils and giving them opportunities to talk about their progress. This is consistent across the school. Pupils say they find this very helpful as it helps them understand what they need to do to make their work better. However, on occasions, teachers miss opportunities for pupils, especially the higher attainers, to explore their own ideas or they do not give them enough time to do so.

The new inclusive curriculum is adapted well for the many different cultures represented within the school. Pupils enjoy a very good range of additional opportunities through clubs and activities and over two thirds of the pupils regularly participate in some sort of activity. Singing is a particular strength of the school. For example, the school choir opened the National Festival of Music For Youth at the Symphony Hall in Birmingham in July 2008, and achieved a gold award in the Walsall Singing competition 2009.

Another consequence of their exemplary care is that pupils are valued as individuals. As a result, their self-esteem is raised and they quickly become enthusiastic learners. This, too, has a very positive effect on their behaviour, motivation and relationships. The support for vulnerable pupils is exemplary, too. The school works in very close partnership with parents and carers and outside agencies to meet the learning and welfare needs of these pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The impact of leadership is seen in how effectively the senior managers are embedding ambition and driving improvement. Managers and leaders are all working together well, have pride in what they have achieved and are developing the skills necessary to take on more responsibly for monitoring the school. Senior managers are good at moving relatively less effective teaching to a level as good as the best. Action taken to move the school forward since the last inspection has ensured that the school is now good at promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, and at narrowing the gap

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

in performance between different groups of pupils. Consequently, pupils are now achieving more challenging targets.

Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures are outstanding and that all statutory requirements, including child protection and risk assessment, are regularly reviewed and approved. The recent work of the governors shows they are becoming more involved in the strategic management of the school. Although they are starting to hold the school to account for its work, they do not yet have sufficiently robust ways of checking on the school's progress.

Outstanding partnerships have been established with parents and carers. Parents and carers make valuable contributions to the school. Their views are actively sought and valued, and the overwhelming majority believe the school understands and helps their children.

The school is a cohesive community in which diversity is valued and it is also outward looking. It has forged good links with communities locally, nationally and globally. As a result, the school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Leaders are strengthening this aspect of its work even further by establishing links with communities outside the large urban conurbations to give pupils more experience of life in rural settings within the United Kingdom.

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	1
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	1
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

When children join the school, their skills and understanding are typically well below those for their age. They make good progress in all areas of their learning because

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

teaching and learning are good. However, most are still below the expected levels by the start of Year 1. Throughout the Nursery and Reception classes, children, from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, quickly learn to cooperate very well and play together harmoniously. Children feel safe and secure within this caring environment that is well run and managed. All adults have a good knowledge and understanding of how children of this age learn. They have high expectations of what each child can achieve. Record keeping is meticulous and is used well to plan the next steps in learning. The outdoor area provides an interesting extension to the classroom and is used well. The setting is well led and managed, and teamwork between the adults is well developed. There is a good balance between the activities chosen by the children and those directed by the adults. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's progress and they are helped to support their children's learning at home. While the staff are effective at assessing the progress of all the children, there are some missed opportunities to challenge the higher attainers so they always make rapid progress.

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

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are very positive about the school, its friendly atmosphere and the care given to pupils. They also indicated that their children are happy at school and are kept safe. The inspectors fully endorse these views. There were a number of written comments in praise of the school. There were a very small number of constructive criticisms, none of which emerged as recurring concerns. These were shared and discussed with the headteacher.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	63	18	35	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	46	26	50	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	42	29	56	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	40	29	56	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	50	23	44	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	40	29	56	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	46	27	52	1	2	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)	22	42	27	52	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	37	28	54	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	37	28	54	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	33	31	60	1	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	37	31	60	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	46	28	54	0	0	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



21 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitehall Infant and Nursery School, Walsall WS1

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed looking at your work, seeing you in lessons and talking to so many of you. We were pleased to hear that you like your school and enjoy learning. Almost all your parents or carers are happy with the school, too. You get on well with each other and help the school to run smoothly. You listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and learn a lot in lessons. The school has worked really hard to make sure your parents or carers bring you to school regularly, but a few of you still have too much time off.

Yours is a good school where all the adults are working hard to make it even better.

This means that there are lots of things that it does really well, but also that there are some things that could be even better. Your headteacher and all the staff are doing a good job and they want to make things even better for you. We have asked them to do two things we think might help.

You too can play your part by always being ready for school in the morning and telling your parents or carers about the exciting things you are going to do each day.

Yours sincerely

John Earish

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.