

Whitehall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109132
Local Authority	Bristol
Inspection number	337225
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	397
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Owen
Headteacher	Sarah Allen
Date of previous school inspection	9 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons, before- and after-school care, breaks and lunchtime. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils and took account of views expressed through pupil and staff surveys. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work, data on progress, monitoring reports, policies, planning and 65 parent questionnaires.

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

- whether there has been any rise in standards and increase in progress, especially in mathematics and for the more able pupils
- the use of assessment for ensuring an increase in progress, and pupils' involvement in the process
- the impact of measures to improve teaching and learning
- trends in attendance.

Information about the school

Whitehall is a large primary school. Pupils come from a wide mix of backgrounds and ethnic groups. The largest group are White British with those from Black African or Pakistani origins constituting the next largest groups. High numbers of pupils are eligible for free school meals and speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has been awarded the Bristol Inclusion Standard and Healthy School Award. From September 2007 the school was managed by a seconded acting headteacher and an advisory headteacher, with substantial local authority support. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2008 and most teachers have been appointed in the last two years.

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

Whitehall is a satisfactory school which is improving rapidly. The school has a welcoming and attractive environment where pupils thrive and enjoy their learning. Significant changes have taken place, which have ensured that pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, now make good progress. When pupils join the school in Reception their skills are below those expected for their age. A legacy of significant underachievement means that those leaving Year 6 still do not reach the expected attainment for their age and standards remain too low overall, especially for the more able pupils and in mathematics. Nevertheless good teaching is leading to good progress in all year groups which means that standards are rising. By the end of Reception and Year 2, attainment is now in line with that found nationally. Achievement is therefore satisfactory.

Good care and guidance mean that pupils are kept and feel safe. Behaviour in all classes is now good and there is little disruption to learning. Pupils want to succeed and show responsible attitudes to working hard and doing their best. Attendance is low and, although the majority of pupils attend well, a few take extended leave, which has a negative impact on their achievement. The school recognises that it does not call their homes sufficiently quickly when pupils are first absent.

The head teacher, along with senior leaders, has a strong vision for the future and high expectations of what all pupils can achieve. They have put robust, effective systems into place for evaluating the work of the school and make all staff accountable for outcomes. They have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and what needs to be improved. This has resulted in rapid, effective change, especially in improved teaching and learning and in improved performance in all subjects, particularly in English. Subject leaders are closely involved in monitoring outcomes for pupils and leading innovation. The capacity to improve further is good.

Lessons are lively, engaging and enjoyable in a wide range of subjects. Although the majority of lessons are good and some are outstanding, a significant minority are not of this high quality. Subject leaders do not monitor teaching regularly but the school recognise this as the next step in tackling inconsistencies in the quality of learning. Teachers' subject knowledge and skills in mathematics vary and this impacts on the progress pupils make. Accurate assessment means that teachers know pupils' levels of attainment well. Pupils have broad targets in English and mathematics, which are helping them make good progress in key areas. However, pupils do not have individual targets that are specific to themselves and their learning needs. Pupils are therefore not always clear about what they are aiming for or how to improve their work. As a result, some lessons lack challenge for the more able pupils and overall progress for this group

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is satisfactory rather than good.

The satisfactory curriculum involves pupils well in deciding what they would like to learn and has strong links between subjects which are effective in supporting key skills in all lessons. Senior leaders recognise that provision, to extend the learning of gifted and talented pupils, is insufficient. They have recently appointed a coordinator to address this shortcoming. With good social skills, a positive attitude to work and improving basic skills, pupils are suitably prepared for their next school and futures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly in mathematics and for the more able pupils by:
 - strengthening the subject knowledge and skills of all teachers in mathematics
 - making sure there is sufficient challenge for the more able pupils in all lessons
 - developing the curriculum for gifted and talented pupils.
- Ensure that teaching and learning is consistently good in most lessons by:
 - providing more sharply focused individual targets for pupils and helping them monitor their own progress in each lesson more closely
 - involving subject leaders more in monitoring and supporting lessons.
- Increase attendance by:
 - implementing first-day calling
 - working closely with parents to communicate the impact on their child's future prospects of taking extended leave during term time.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' good enjoyment of learning is evident in the keen attention they pay to teachers and the enthusiastic way they work together to solve problems and search for information. They especially enjoy art and music. Attainment by the time pupils leave the school is too low but rising significantly for all ages and abilities. Attainment is highest in English and science and lowest in mathematics. It has risen from well below to below national averages in just under two years. Good progress in all age groups means that attainment is now average by the end of Year 2, but pupils in Years 3 to 6 have further to catch up, although the gap is closing. It is encouraging to see all pupils answer questions confidently and work hard to achieve their class targets. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from different ethnic groups therefore do equally well. However, although improving, not enough of the more able pupils reach the higher levels. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils' motivation is high. A few pupils expressed concern about behaviour, but most agree that it is much improved. As one commented, 'we are all friends here'. Skilled support ensures that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do equally well and are proud of new learning, confidently naming shapes in one mathematics lesson, for example.

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Pupils behave safely, with little unkind or difficult behaviour. It is recognised that attendance is too low to ensure good progress for those involved. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lives with many commenting upon the way they eat more fruit and vegetables and less 'junk food'. Pupils' good contribution to the community includes participating in an eco council, helping with a local traffic survey and walking to school to help the environment. Pupils have a particularly respectful and positive attitude to people who are different from themselves and are well aware of the different cultures and beliefs in their society.

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	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	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	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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall in all age groups, particularly in English and science but the quality is not consistent. Strengths include good behaviour management and warm supportive relationships between pupils and with staff. One pupil typically commented, 'when you are not sure, they really cheer you up and help you'. Varied, active lessons keep pupils engaged and they work productively in groups and independently. Accurate assessment supports planning in matching work to the needs of different ability groups

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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but not consistently so. The way pupils' individual targets are set is not specific enough to meet their needs in every lesson and some, particularly the more able pupils, make slower progress as a result. A very small minority of pupils are unsure of how well they are doing or what to do to improve. This is evident in a minority of maths lessons where work is not sufficiently challenging and teachers lack the subject skills to take learning forward quickly enough. There is an increasing proportion of outstanding lessons where learning is very rapid and teachers adapt quickly to different learning needs.

The satisfactory curriculum is rapidly improving. A focus on boys' writing, and the needs of pupils who speak limited English has raised attainment for these groups. The 'experiential' curriculum where pupils choose topics and work is planned around a key visit has proven to be particularly successful. It is especially effective in developing key skills in all lessons. The school recognises the lack of provision to support the more able and gifted pupils in developing their special skills. Pupils have good access to computers, although the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in different subjects is not well planned. The curriculum is rich in the number of trips and visits, and there are productive links with local schools.

Pupils are well cared for in this safe and supportive environment. Procedures to keep pupils safe are robust. Working closely with external agencies, pupils who have specific social or educational needs are supported very well. Information is passed carefully between year groups and pupils' books move with them, providing a straightforward way of ensuring continuity of learning. Good links with local secondary schools ensure a smooth transition. The school has worked effectively to improve attendance for some individuals, but has identified further steps that should be taken. The breakfast and after-school care is of good quality especially in the excellent hot meals provided at both ends of the day as well as the support children receive in doing their homework and keeping safe.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has led significant change with skill and determination and together with the leadership team, has succeeded in improving almost every aspect of the school in a remarkably short space of time. There is still much to do, but staff work closely as a team and morale is high. The physical environment has been upgraded to increase pupils' feeling of well-being. Governors are beginning to play a more significant role in

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school improvement, although many of them are new this term and are developing the relevant skills. They already have good procedures in place to make the school accountable for outcomes, including safeguarding. The focus on collecting accurate data and monitoring regularly has been successful in enabling senior leaders to address shortcomings in the most important areas. As a result, attainment and progress have risen significantly, and the quality of teaching is improving rapidly. Subject leaders have achieved a great deal in improving practice and outcomes. They are aware that, without monitoring lessons, they do not have a sufficiently detailed view to ensure a more consistent quality of teaching.

Procedures to safeguard pupils have been reorganised and are now of good quality and effective. Engagement of parents and carers is developing well, with regular events to engage them in their child's learning. The school effectively promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination. Inequalities in learning between different ethnic groups have been effectively targeted. This has resulted, for example, in the Somali pupils now making equal progress to their peers. The school works well to promote community cohesion, particularly locally, by taking steps to include more parents and in ensuring that pupils from numerous ethnic minorities form a happy and harmonious community.

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	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	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

When children join Reception their skills are below those expected for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. Good links with parents and

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pre-school providers mean that they settle quickly and soon make new friends. Children's skills are assessed accurately and built upon systematically, so that by the time they join Year 1 their attainment is average. This demonstrates the good progress children make in each area of learning. Good leadership has ensured that provision in Reception has improved significantly, from inadequate to good, in under two years. Teaching is good, with skilled individual support and kind supportive approaches to make children feel safe and develop confidence. The curriculum is broad and appropriate, with substantial, varied use of computers. At times, opportunities for children to explore their surroundings and find out things for themselves are too limited, and sessions rely too much on the teacher leading events. The outside environment has been beautifully designed, with the children helping. For example, the adobe hut was built with the children and is one of their favourite places for learning. They were enjoying catching raindrops from its roof in one session. There is a good flow of learning between inside and outdoors and it is delightful to see children chatting excitedly, while planning to travel to a 'wedding' or the 'seaside' in the classroom's 'mobile home'. Children quickly become more independent and show considerable support and consideration for each other in this safe and caring environment.

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school, although the number of questionnaires returned was low. They appreciate the improvements that have been made. They particularly like the way their children enjoy school, the way staff are so approachable and the support given to help children lead healthy lives. A very few expressed concerns about behaviour, although the team found behaviour to be good overall and greatly improved this term.

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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 397 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	47	20	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	34	28	44	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	23	36	29	45	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	33	27	41	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	34	28	44	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	40	25	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	31	29	45	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)	12	19	29	45	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	25	31	48	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	20	26	40	4	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	24	29	45	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	31	26	40	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	40	24	37	1	2	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.



22 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitehall Primary School, Bristol, BS5 9AT

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons. Your school is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school with many interesting things going on, just as you described. Your headteacher and senior staff, work hard to keep developing the school, and for this reason, your work is getting better each year. However, a few of you do not attend often enough and we have asked the school to look at ways of helping you to attend more often.

Skilful teaching helps you to make good progress in your lessons and standards are rising. As a result, you do well particularly in English. We like the way you really enjoy your lessons and always try to do your best. We have asked your school to raise attainment, especially in mathematics and for those of you who learn quickly. You told us that your teachers make lessons fun and interesting and we can see that they help you to do well. We would, though, like to see that all lessons are of the same good quality as the majority. To help this happen we would like your targets to be more detailed and involve you more in knowing how to improve. We are sure that you will discuss this with your teachers and help them by working hard and sharing your ideas.

A good range of activities provide many opportunities for you to contribute well to school life and the community. The responsibilities that you take on are heartening, for example the eco committee and school council, and the way you help decide what topics to study. You were keen to tell us that the school keeps you safe and looks after you very well. It is therefore very pleasing to see that you are helping yourselves by taking plenty of exercise and eating a healthy diet. Your behaviour is good, especially in the way you value learning. You show good respect and understanding towards others, including those who have different beliefs and ways of living, which helps make your school a happy and welcoming community.

We think that this, alongside your mature attitudes to working with others, helps you to be suitably prepared for your next school and future lives.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Potheary

Lead inspector

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