

Whittlebury Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122003
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	340066
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Linda Killman HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rhian Russell-Jeffrey
Headteacher	Eliza Bolger
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). HMI visited both classes frequently over two days, staying for extended periods of time on five occasions. She observed all of the staff teaching including the headteacher. Meetings were held with pupils, staff, governors and a group of parents and carers. HMI observed the school's work and looked at data on pupils' attainment and progress, the school's plans for improvement, minutes of governors' meetings, school policies and safeguarding documentation including health and safety logs. An analysis was undertaken of 32 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 22 from pupils and six from staff.

HMI reviewed many aspects of the school's work looking in detail at the following:

- the key features of provision that are resulting in pupils' improving achievement, especially pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- how effectively the curriculum matches pupils' interests, needs and wide-ranging abilities in mixed-age classes
- the impact of recent initiatives implemented to raise standards in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT)
- pupils' understanding of religious, cultural and social diversity
- the school's effectiveness in promoting community cohesion.

Information about the school

This is a small village school where pupils are taught in two classes: the infant class accommodates pupils from Reception to Year 2, and from Year 3 onwards pupils are taught in the junior class. The headteacher teaches for half the week in the infant class. All teaching staff and the very large majority of support staff and governors are new since the school's last inspection.

Around a third of pupils live in the village; the remainder come from outlying villages and Towcester town. Most pupils are White British and none speaks English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average; of these very few have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school mid-year is very high.

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

This school may be small in size but it has a huge impact on developing pupils as confident, enthusiastic learners. It provides a good education for pupils of all abilities, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Every pupil is cherished for who they are and what they bring to the school and as a result, they thrive academically and socially. The headteacher's deep-seated ambition for every pupil to achieve all that they can is the driving force behind the school's success. Her relentless pursuit of higher standards and accelerated progress for all has launched the school into a new era. Judged a satisfactory school when it was inspected three years ago, the school is now good in most respects with impressive strengths in some areas.

The most noteworthy improvements are:

- pupils' good achievement in English and mathematics with some exceptionally high standards achieved in writing
- pupils' outstanding behaviour and self-discipline
- excellent provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the high quality of care, guidance and support that enable pupils to develop in confidence and build their self-esteem.

All staff have all stepped up to the mark in ensuring that learning takes priority. They work cohesively as an effective team. Teaching is good in almost all respects. Teachers use precise assessment information to adapt the work in English and mathematics to meet pupils' wide-ranging needs and abilities; skills in these subjects are taught systematically. The school is aware that there is more work to do to emulate this in all other subjects.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers trust the school to keep their children safe and believe that the school promotes healthy lifestyles. The pupils bear this out but lack depth to their understanding of life beyond the immediate locality and some of the potential risks in modern society relating to the use of ICT and harmful substances. The governing body promotes community cohesion satisfactorily with a generally positive impact within the school's close-knit community but not yet effectively enough beyond it.

Governors and staff with leadership responsibilities are developing their skills as leaders and managers enabling them to share the workload more equitably. They welcome professional development and share good practice extensively. Self-evaluation is accurate, refreshingly honest and realistic. This, together with the school's good track record in improving outcomes for pupils provides good capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils' good achievement in English and mathematics is replicated in all other subjects by:
 - teaching subject skills systematically
 - adopting teachers' good practice in the assessment of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
- Within the curriculum, deepen pupils' understanding of diversity within modern society, and risks associated with new technologies and harmful substances by:
 - pinpointing opportunities for focused teaching suitably adapted for different age groups
 - developing links with people living in contrasting communities.
- Strengthen the school's contribution to community cohesion by:
 - detailing its aims in a robust action plan
 - evaluating the impact of its actions within and beyond the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' achievement is improving rapidly. The small size of each year group results in wide variability in attainment and progress year-on-year. Taking this fully into account, HMI looked at the progress of individuals over time using the school's tracking system and by sampling every pupil's work. The evidence shows that the very large majority of pupils are making above expected progress in English and mathematics. Standards evened out over three years are above average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid progress because their difficulties are identified quickly and interventions are personalised adeptly to match their academic and personal needs. Pupils of both genders and all abilities are highly motivated and keen to learn because the school's innovative approach to curriculum design provides them with rich, memorable learning experiences with an emphasis on experimentation and investigation.

A pertinent example of pupils' high motivation and accelerated progress was seen in the junior class. They were learning how to measure time and discover ways to overcome difficulties whilst solving time problems. The youngest pupils enjoyed sequencing digital images of the school taken at various times during the school day, recording the times using analogue clocks. Others worked independently using computer software to consolidate learning by setting times on screen and self-checking their accuracy. The older pupils worked collaboratively solving challenging problems and discovering the most effective methods for working. The most able were challenged with a 'Whodunit?' mystery that involved checking the whereabouts of suspects and discovering the culprit. All pupils made excellent progress, working productively, mostly without intervention from an adult.

Pupils' social skills are well-developed. They behave impeccably mainly because they are

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expected to but also because the adults model excellent personal skills for them to emulate. Attendance is above average although some parents and carers routinely request leave for family holidays in term time. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. The depth of their understanding of religious, cultural and social diversity, whilst satisfactory, is weaker. The oldest pupils act with maturity often nurturing the younger pupils offering sensitive encouragement and advice to guide them in acting with due regard for others. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, for instance putting forward ideas as school councillors and contributing to community entertainment events such as 'bad hair days' and discos to raise funds for equipment and charities. They leave the school as well-rounded, confident and successful individuals, a judgement validated by an ex-pupil who wrote in a letter to HMI 'I was proud to leave the school with three good Level 5s (SATs) and start my secondary school education ... full of confidence in my ability.'

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	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Every pupil receives a warm welcome on a daily basis and the school provides a

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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nurturing environment for work and play. Staff work in true partnership and this generates professional debate concerning every pupil's needs. Teachers use robust assessment information in literacy and numeracy in addition to their detailed knowledge of pupils' personalities and preferred ways of learning, to plan effective lessons. These capture their interest, challenge their thinking and help them to overcome weaknesses. The school's excellent care, guidance and support with great attention to detail help new arrivals to settle in quickly and make good progress. One new parent commented that 'the school has the knack of knowing exactly what our children need'. Resources are deployed very effectively for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable especially those who exhibit challenging behaviour. The school knows the pupils at greatest risk extremely well, including those with poor attendance and gives priority to safeguarding their welfare. The school charter is understood by all and pupils know that misdemeanours will ultimately result in a sanction while good behaviour is rewarded. Attendance issues are followed up swiftly.

The curriculum is adapted very skilfully so that within the wide ranging ages and abilities found in both classes, the work in English and mathematics is pitched at exactly the right level. Pupils enjoy a broad and enriched curriculum during and after school. Some parents and carers would like to benefit from wraparound care before and after school. Use of the outdoor space to extend learning and opportunities to study in the locality are plentiful. In these situations pupils are acutely aware of how to look after themselves.

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 headteacher is the driving force behind recent improvements. Starting from the premise that all pupils should enjoy school but they also need to behave well and develop good skills in literacy and numeracy to become proficient learners, she set out to raise pupils' achievement with determination. She demonstrates skilful teaching, able to inspire and support others in developing their practice. All staff and governors are ambitious for the school to be the best it can be. Staff's views were unanimous that they are proud to work in the school and the positive impact of the 'dramatic change' that has occurred, for example in the quality of pupils' writing. Curriculum development is being led innovatively. Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving rapidly with new computer software being used extensively to consolidate their learning. Governors are

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involved actively in the life of the school. They know it well and provide good support and an improving level of challenge as they develop their skills through governor training. The school is actively promoting community cohesion within the school community. More work is required to sharpen up plans to improve pupils' understanding of religious, cultural and social diversity nationally and abroad and then evaluate the impact of any actions taken.

Equal opportunities are promoted strongly within school, particularly in successfully integrating pupils with significant learning and/or physical disabilities. Staff are zealous in challenging discrimination and use data effectively to check that all make good progress. The school realises the mutual benefit of developing strong professional partnerships with other similar schools to share good practice.

Safeguarding arrangements and systems for child protection fully meet requirements. Arrangements for interagency work are effective. Safety and staying safe are promoted strongly in most areas with diligence evident in health and safety records, risk assessments for school visits and using tools safely. Safeguarding is not graded good because coverage in the curriculum, to ensure that pupils have sufficient depth to their understanding of risks associated with contemporary living, is not as thorough.

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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in Reception benefit from an entirely appropriate Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum regardless of the fact that they share the classroom and outdoor spaces with pupils in Key Stage 1. The headteacher's specialism in early years education strongly

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influences the good quality of the provision. Children start school with typical attainment levels for four-year-olds. Most reach a good level of development by the end of their Reception year.

Exciting provision indoors and outside and skilful teaching encourages children to be confident, independent and enthusiastic learners. Regular and rigorous assessment ensures staff plan accurately for children's next steps in learning. Sensitive questioning assesses and extends children's knowledge and understanding and opportunities for talk to develop their linguistic skills are plentiful. Children receive good quality adult support in all areas of learning. Resources are generally well used; for example technology is used effectively to foster children's problem solving skills. Resources for children to choose from in making art are too narrow.

Children's writing skills develop quickly because activities invite them to practice their skills. Children learn phonics (letters and sounds) through systematic teaching and this supports them well as emerging readers and writers. Home-school links are encouraged. For example, in addition to regular discussions with parents and carers, they are able join their children for drop-in sessions on Fridays to see their work. The transition between Reception and Year 1 is seamless, particularly for children who still need to learn through active play. Learning is such fun in Reception that children behave impeccably. Support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is exceptional. Welfare requirements are met to a high standard.

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

There was a high response to the questionnaire: three in every four parents and carers returned them. All respondents agree that the school is managed well; the teaching is good; their children's needs are met; and that the school prepares them well for the future. Discussions with parents and carers during the inspection strongly endorse these views. The table below shows that one or two parents and carers are dissatisfied with some aspects of the school. HMI did not find any evidence to corroborate their views. Pupils are judged to make good progress and their behaviour exemplary.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whittlebury Church of England 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 inspector received 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 47 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	81	4	13	2	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	91	3	9	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	69	8	25	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	53	13	41	2	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	75	8	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	59	10	31	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	69	10	31	0	0	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)	23	72	5	16	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	69	8	25	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	66	5	16	0	0	2	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	72	7	22	0	0	2	6
The school is led and managed effectively	27	84	3	9	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	91	0	0	3	9	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.



17 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whittlebury Church of England Primary School NN12 8XH

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. After watching all of you learning in class, looking at your work and talking to staff, I decided that yours is a good school. You are learning faster than ever from the good teaching you receive and you told me how much you enjoy school. I found some excellent things too. These are:

- your excellent, thoughtful and respectful behaviour
- the adults' very sensitive and caring support that helps to make you feel happy and confident at school
- the excellent progress that those of you who have extra needs and/or difficulties make
- the way that the school makes sure that you are all treated equally well.

Your headteacher, governors and all of the staff are doing a good job and want the school to be the best it can be. Since inspectors last visited the school has moved impressively from satisfactory to good. I have given some things for the school to work on to make it even better. You can help by continuing to work hard.

To develop your skills in all subjects to the good levels you are achieving in literacy and numeracy.

To make sure that you learn even more about how to keep yourselves safe.

To help you to understand even more about people who live in different parts of the country and the world.

Most of your parents and carers are very pleased with all that the school provides. I will always remember your school as a welcoming and friendly place where everyone matters...especially YOU!

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman

Her Majesty's Inspector

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