

Whixall CofE (Controlled) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123516
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	340355
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2010
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Lester
Headteacher	Nicola Brayford
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed nine lessons and four teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's assessments of pupils' attainment and progress, results of the school's own checks on the quality of teaching and documents relating to the planning of the curriculum. They also scrutinised the results of the 39 responses to the parental questionnaires, along side responses to the pupils' and staff questionnaires.

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

- the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation in overcoming variations in the quality of teaching
- whether the recent apparent decline in achievement has been reversed.

Information about the school

This smaller than average school serves a rural area. The village of Whixall has no distinct centre, but consists of individual houses spread over a very large area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all pupils come from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. There have been many changes of staff since the school was last inspected; two year groups have had seven different teachers, often covering for long term absences. A new headteacher took up post in 2007 and the school no longer has a deputy headteacher. All Year 6 pupils were on a residential visit during the inspection, and all Year 5 pupils were participating in a sports tournament at another school during the morning of the second day of the inspection.

The school shares its site with Whixall Nursery. This is privately managed and is subject to a separate inspection. Since the school was last inspected it has been awarded the ActiveMark and achieved Healthy Schools and Safer Schools 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Whixall Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has some clear strengths, most notably pupils' high attendance and the outstanding extent to which pupils feel safe as a result of the complete confidence they have in staff to take good care of them. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves fit and lead a healthy lifestyle. It is no surprise that the school's good work in helping pupils to keep safe and healthy has been recognised in recent awards. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Academic progress is also satisfactory, but varies across the school in response to differences in the quality of teaching. Children get off to a good start in the reception class, but then progress slows in Years 1 to 4, before picking up again in Years 5 and 6. Progress is good in reading across the school, because all staff use the assessments in reading diaries to ensure that pupils are given books that are suitably challenging. Reading is also given a prominent place on the curriculum, with 30 minutes allocated each day. Progress in writing and mathematics is slower, although still satisfactory, mainly because teachers do not consistently use information gained from assessments to match work to the abilities of individual pupils. Pupils' mental arithmetic is relatively weak, because they do not have enough frequent and regular opportunities to practise their skills. Teachers make good use of targets in Years 5 and 6, so pupils know what they need to do to improve. In Years 1 to 4 however, targets are rarely used in mathematics and those on individual education plans are not always referred to in numeracy when supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some of the reasons for the variations in progress lie with the many changes of teaching staff, which lead to progress slowing as new teachers get to know their pupils. The headteacher is an excellent role model in her teaching. She now teaches full time in order to minimise disruption to pupils' learning, and this has successfully halted the recent decline in achievement. However, it also means that she does not have enough time to fully monitor the work of the school and demonstrate the best possible practice to new staff, despite the good support from the managers of literacy and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Governors play a sound role in monitoring the work of the school, but this has not been formalised so the results are not used as effectively as they could be. While the changes in staffing have been unavoidable, the school is not doing all it can to improve the teaching by staff who are new to the school. Most importantly, curriculum plans are not sufficiently detailed. They do not provide guidance as to the tasks that should be used with pupils of differing abilities. Temporary staff are not always given guidance as to how their teaching can be improved through participation in relevant training. Nevertheless, the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is broadly accurate and it has identified the most important areas for improvement in pupils'

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achievement and progress is starting to improve once again. This, together with the evidence of clear improvement in other outcomes, demonstrates that the school has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the variations in quality of teaching across the school by:
 - ensuring the headteacher has sufficient time to monitor provision and improve teaching through modelling outstanding practice
 - providing teachers new to the school with curriculum plans that have sufficient detail to allow them to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils
 - providing better opportunities for long-term supply teachers to access relevant training
 - formalising the monitoring carried out by governors, so as to provide better information on the quality of teaching.
- Improve pupils' progress in writing in Years 1 to 4 by making better use of assessment information to match work to pupils' abilities.
- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics in Years 1 to 4 by:
 - increasing the opportunities for mental arithmetic
 - ensuring teachers use assessment information to match work to pupils' abilities
 - making better use of targets, including those on individual education plans, to inform pupils of what they have to do to improve.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils enjoy coming to school a great deal, which is reflected in their high levels of attendance. They like the extra clubs and activities, all the friends they have and the relationships they have built up with staff. Achievement is satisfactory, with pupils making sound progress in developing the skills they will need in later life. The learning observed by inspectors in lessons varied between year groups and classes. When pupils were interested in the work, and found it suitably challenging, they concentrated hard and enjoyed getting to grips with a problem. Learning was outstanding in a Year 5 science lesson, for example, when pupils discussed the relative importance of plants and humans. This demonstrated their good capacity to sensibly debate moral and spiritual issues, such as 'are humans special?' In most lessons observed, pupils worked well in groups or independently. However, they often did not pay full attention when either the teacher or one of their peers was speaking. The pace of learning slowed when pupils were given tasks that they found too easy or too hard. This was common in lessons observed in Years 1 to 4. In these cases, pupils lost concentration and their

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conversations drifted to other topics, unrelated to the lesson. The most able often finished tasks and had to wait for others to catch up before moving on. There are very few differences in the progress of different groups of pupils, although those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in English. There was also a clear difference in behaviour between lessons. Where pupils were engaged, their behaviour was exemplary, but only satisfactory when they were not motivated. Behaviour improves significantly as pupils move through the school. Outside of lessons, behaviour is consistently of a high standard. Pupils report that there is no bullying and none felt intimidated in any way. Pupils are polite, respectful and a joy to talk to. The school council and children in the reception class play a good role in improving the school by suggesting ideas for the outdoor areas for example. Pupils' role in the wider community is more limited, partly because of the spread out nature of the local community. This also hampers opportunities for pupils to engage with others from different backgrounds to their own, which limits their cultural development.

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	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	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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

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

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Teachers often have good ideas for lessons that spark pupils' imaginations, such as designing a home for dinosaurs. They also place pupils' learning in context, for example, by enabling them to analyse commercial packaging in order to identify persuasive writing. Assessments are generally accurate, and used well to place pupils in groups according to their ability. Too often though, in Years 1 to 4, these groups are all given exactly the same task to do, whereas in later years the tasks reflect the levels that pupils have reached in their previous work.

The school provides a very welcoming environment, with pupils known well by all adults. Pupils are given a sound range of opportunities to develop their basic skills in numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology. Good attention is given to pupils' personal development. Many pupils stay for the extra clubs that are provided after school. One of the most popular is 'church club', which plays an important part in pupils' spiritual development. Procedures for improving attendance and behaviour are followed consistently, and have resulted in high levels of attendance and markedly improved behaviour as pupils get older. The school is particularly effective at teaching pupils how to stay safe and aware of risks. This is particularly noticeable at the end of the day, when there are many dangers from traffic. The school has excellent procedures for ensuring pupils only leave one at a time, and only when there is a parent or carer waiting to collect them directly from the school gate. Pupils follow the instructions they are given in an exemplary manner, and all leave without incident.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders, including governors, have appropriate expectations of what the school should be achieving. These are usually conveyed well to staff, but their implementation is limited by the high staff turnover. Targets are challenging, but performance has fallen short of them in recent years. Lesson observations provide clear guidance on how teaching can be improved, but over a third of those carried out by senior staff have been targeted at reading, where performance is already good, rather than concentrating on weaker subjects. Governors also visit lessons, but no formal records are kept of their findings in order to build a fuller picture of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Parents understand the issues facing the school and are strongly supportive of its efforts. They are kept well informed through frequent communications, and find the headteacher very approachable. Equality of opportunity is

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satisfactory. There are few differences between the progress of different groups, but many between classes. Pupils receive a good education in what discrimination means, but the school's leaders are aware that they need to do more to provide opportunities for pupils to engage with, and learn from, pupils from different backgrounds from their own. Plans are already in place to link with a school in Oldham, and another in Tanzania, in order to improve the school's satisfactory provision for community cohesion. Development plans address the school's main areas of weakness, but the expected outcomes for pupils are not always made clear, which makes it difficult for the school's leaders to assess the success of its actions. Safeguarding is at the heart of the school's ethos, and good practice is adopted across all aspects of its work in this respect.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the reception class. They start school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are lower than those typically found for their age. Good teaching ensures they soon catch up and they start Year 1 with average standards. Progress in personal development, mathematics, reading and writing is particularly good, with physical and creative development a little slower than other areas of learning.. Careful and frequent assessments are made of children's achievement, and used well to ensure that their skills are always being built upon. Indoors there is a good range of resources that are used to provide an effective mix of activities that are led by the teacher and those chosen by the children themselves, but this is more limited in the

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outdoor area. Good attention is paid to meeting welfare requirements by a manager with a solid understanding of the needs of children in this age group. Parents are entirely happy with the care and education their children receive. They are kept very well informed of their child's progress, and the use of reading books is particularly effective in helping them to support their children's learning at home. Good plans are in place to improve provision, although not all are sharply focussed on the expected benefits for children. Overall, the reception class is well led and managed, and provides children with a good start to their schooling.

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

Parents are very happy with, and supportive of, the school's work. They are rightly highly satisfied with the school's promotion of good health and keeping their children safe. A few parents of pupils whose education has been disrupted by staffing difficulties are concerned that their children are not making good enough progress. Inspectors entirely agree with the parents' views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whixall CofE (Controlled) 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 39 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 130 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	56	17	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	72	11	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	33	24	62	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	38	20	51	4	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	44	18	46	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	56	17	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	62	15	38	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)	13	33	23	59	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	46	21	54	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	44	19	49	3	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	38	21	54	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	26	67	11	28	2	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	64	10	26	2	5	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.



20 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whixall CofE (Controlled) Primary School, Whitchurch, SY13 2SB

Many thanks for all your help when we visited your school. You were very polite and well behaved. I very much enjoyed talking to you all. We found that you receive a satisfactory education. You get off to a good start in the reception class. Your progress slows in Years 1 to 4, before picking up again in Years 5 and 6. In lessons where you do well, your teachers give you work that helps you to learn, but in other lessons it is sometimes a bit too easy or hard for you. So we have asked your teachers to always give each of you harder work, which you can succeed at if you try your hardest, especially in writing and mathematics. You said that you did not always understand your targets, so we have asked them to make sure that you always know what you are aiming for, and what you need to do to improve your work in mathematics. You make good progress in your reading, because you do this every day and you like the reading books you are given. We have asked your teachers to give you some mental arithmetic more often, so that you can make good progress with that too.

You told us how exceptionally safe you feel, and we agree. All the adults are very good at caring for you, and you help by behaving well in the playground and following rules that keep everyone safe. Sometimes you do not listen well enough in lessons, so make sure you always pay attention when someone is speaking. You are excellent at coming to school whenever you can. Well done! Some of you have had lots of different teachers, which has slowed your progress. The people who run the school couldn't do anything about teachers coming and going, but we have asked them to give new teachers more help so they can settle in as quickly as possible and teach good quality lessons. In order to improve things, your headteacher now teaches all the time, but this does not leave her enough time to run the school as well as she would like. We have asked the governors to give her a bit more help, and time, so that she can improve the school more quickly.

Yours sincerely

David Driscoll

Lead inspector

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