



Whitby Heath Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111087
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 278596
Inspection dates 27 February 2006 to 28 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Brian Padgett HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Wyedale
School category	Community		Whitby
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 6RJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 355 1781
Number on roll	401	Fax number	0151 356 8191
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr William Clowes
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Lynn Thompson

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 27 February 2006 - 28 February 2006	Inspection number 278596
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school is situated within a residential area about a mile from Ellesmere Port town centre. The school is popular and nearly half of the children come from outside the immediate area, some from considerable distances. Children come from a wide variety of social backgrounds. Nearly all children are white British with just a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. Relatively few children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities but some of these are quite marked, including six with statements of special educational need.

A pre-school setting is housed in one of the classrooms. It is managed independently of the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its children with some significant strengths. In particular, it has a wonderful ethos, largely generated by the warmth of the welcome staff extend to children, their parents and the community and the level of care and concern for each child. Children settle quickly in this friendly and nurturing environment. Their personal development is good as a result of the care, support and pastoral guidance they receive. Children's achievement is satisfactory overall. The school has maintained standards at Year 6 that are above the average, with minor ups and downs, since the last inspection. Children with problems, whether in learning or behaviour, make good and sometimes exceptional progress. Standards and progress in the Reception classes (the Foundation Stage) are good. However, most children make the best progress in Year 6, which is why they achieve above average standards. Elsewhere, although teaching is at least satisfactory, it is not as effective in raising standards. There are strengths in the curriculum the school offers, but there are also weaker aspects. The leadership and management are good. The senior team know the school well, and hold an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses that matched that of inspectors closely. Improvement was delayed after the last inspection because of protracted staffing issues. These are resolved and the school is now improving at a good pace. There is a strong will to improve at all levels, to provide more rigorous management and iron out the less effective aspects of teaching. The school's capacity to do this is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching by identifying the learning needs of children more accurately and planning to meet these needs.
- Provide a more balanced curriculum, less heavily weighted to literacy and numeracy.
- Instigate a more rigorous approach to management, measuring the success of improvement strategies by the impact they have on raising standards and quality for children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children's achievement is satisfactory. They enter school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. There is no difference in the progress of the white British majority and the few children from minority ethnic backgrounds. Children of all backgrounds are fully integrated. Children get a good start in the Reception classes. Parents are particularly appreciative of the way they are settled into school and the progress they make within this year. Standards at Year 2 are broadly average, and at Year 6, at the end of the juniors, they are generally above average. There are minor variations from year to year because of the slight differences in the abilities and aptitudes of children in the different year groups. Notable features of the pattern in attainment over the past few years are the relatively high proportions of children who

reach the national standards expected of them at 11 years and the relatively low proportion of children who achieve the higher levels. The school broadly meets its targets. Children make steady progress in all classes, except Reception and Year 6, where progress is good.

Children with learning and behaviour difficulties, those with disabilities, and those coping with difficult home circumstances make at least good progress. The school's care for such children is quite exceptional, and extends to all aspects of their well-being and learning. They receive attention from teachers and teaching assistants individually and in small groups and they achieve well. The strategies the school uses to involve such children are not successful all the time, but parents and carers of these children are adamant that the staff could not do more to include their children in the life of the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The children's personal development is good. They are happy at school, they develop a good attitude to learning and become confident and socially aware. Attendance is average, but there is no unauthorised absence. Behaviour is good in class and around school, except sometimes in lessons when the pace of teaching falters or when children's work is too hard for them to tackle independently and no help is available. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show respect for staff and visitors and are considerate to each other. They are taught to resolve difficulties themselves and to acknowledge that they should play a major part in making things better. Children show good social awareness and readily accept responsibility. Not only has the school an active school council, closely involved in decisions affecting the school and the community, it also has a children's fundraising committee to organise and raise funds for a number of charities and urgent causes.

Children are making considerable progress towards understanding what constitutes a safe and healthy lifestyle, and they support the changes being made to provide a healthy lunch and snacks, although they do not as yet choose these routinely. Children make full use of the opportunities to take part in sport. As well as acquiring the basic skills they will need later in life they are developing important life skills that will enable them to play a full part in society as adults.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with good features. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection and in almost half of the lessons, children made good progress. The relationships between children, teachers and teaching assistants are invariably good. Most of the staff have taught at the school for a long time. They know families very well and have known them for many years.

Parents have confidence in the teachers. Many were taught at the school and now help here. Teachers and support staff are hardworking, have good knowledge of the subjects they teach and a growing confidence with new technology.

The school is trying different strategies to raise standards in the basic skills, especially for the more able children. For example, teachers plan more difficult work for these children, and in the juniors, children are taught basic skills in sets graded by ability to provide a better match of work. These approaches are having some, although limited, success. The heart of the problem is teachers' too rigid adherence to the national strategies, particularly for literacy. Teachers are not using the flexibility they now have to depart from the strategies where they do not best meet the needs of the children, and to plan opportunities for reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) into the wider curriculum. There are other weaknesses: in teachers' use of open questions, in the over use of pre-prepared worksheets, and in the helpfulness of marking, but these are not as significant as the point made above. In the more effective lessons, teachers engage children in exciting work and have high expectations of their standards of work and presentation that are not seen in the lessons where progress is satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory, and it has good features in the extent and richness of the extra-curricular activities on offer to children, and in the opportunities the school provides for children's personal development. The school meets the statutory requirements for the curriculum and the lessons are firmly based on the National Curriculum. It is sufficiently broad, but it is not well balanced. Too much of each day is devoted to the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy, almost two thirds in most classes. Reading standards are good but writing standards lag behind. Since writing standards have been an issue for several years, what is currently provided is not raising standards. The school has not yet taken sufficient advantage of the government's guidance to relax the direct emphasis on literacy and numeracy, to focus on those subjects children enjoy, to be flexible with the timetable, and to promote reading, writing, mathematics and ICT through subjects and projects where they will have maximum relevance.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for children are good. The care and support for children, particularly for the most vulnerable, are outstanding; so much so that it is difficult to imagine a school that could care for its children more. The school has robust procedures for safeguarding children, in the care of the premises, its health and safety arrangements, its child protection policies and its checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. It provides very good pastoral guidance for all the children and it fights very hard for the most vulnerable, working closely with various support agencies and the parents to secure the best for them. It is very successful, and parents of such

children are warm in their praise of what the school has done for their children's development and integration.

Considerable progress has been made in setting up assessment and tracking systems to monitor children's progress. Targets are set in class and by management. The levels of work children achieve are recorded to track progress in basic skills and children themselves are more involved in assessing the extent of their learning. These are all positive developments but they are not fully embedded within the school and visible in the planning and marking of children's work in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management are good, overall. The headteacher has resolved difficult staffing issues that hindered the school's progress in the years following the previous inspection. Together with her senior team she has built a settled, smooth-running school with a unified staff and developed an excellent ethos of welcome and care for children. During this time, standards have been maintained. The school is highly regarded by parents and within the community. Parents, governors and even neighbours are kept fully informed about what the school is doing and what children have achieved. Parents feel part of the school and the school part of the community. They value the openness and approachability of staff and feel they can talk to them if issues arise.

The headteacher and senior staff have an accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and the challenges it faces to raise standards further. Teaching is regularly monitored. The governing body is supportive of the school and keen to develop its role. However, although the leadership of the school has excellent features, management is not as effective. This is because key improvement documentation and management systems are currently focused on the completion of tasks and not on the impact the improvement strategies have on raising standards and quality for children, and not rigorously monitoring whether the strategies are succeeding. Nevertheless, the track record of the school, its commitment to improvement and the openness of staff to change indicate its capacity to improve is good. The school offers good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, Mr Johnson, Mrs Kenna and I visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. Thank you for being so open, polite and friendly. We enjoyed our time at Whitby Heath. I am writing to let you know what we found.

The things we think are good about your school are:

- the welcome the headteacher and staff extend to everyone who enters the school: children, parents and visitors. Everyone is made to feel at home
- the care and support each and every one of you receives, especially if you are having learning or behaviour difficulties
- your personal development. We think you are developing into confident, knowledgeable citizens of the future, good at making things better
- the good relationships between the children and all the adults who work in the school. They make Whitby Heath a good place to work in
- the good start you get in Reception and the good standards you reach in Year 6.

We have asked your headteacher and teachers to improve some things to make the school even better. They are:

- to think about how your teachers can make your work more interesting and better suited to all your different abilities. This may mean spending less time on literacy and numeracy in the morning, and practicing reading, writing, mathematics and ICT skills in other subjects and projects
- for senior staff and the governing body to check if their ideas to improve your work are really making a difference to the standards you are reaching.

Of course, you will have a part to play in making some of these improvements happen.

Thank you very much for helping us with the inspection.