

Whitchurch Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109073
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	288271
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Robert Pyner HMI

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 on roll	184
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Dyer
Headteacher	Sonja Tibbatts
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2002
School address	22 Bristol Road Whitchurch Bristol BS14 0PT
Telephone number	01275 833593
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Whitchurch Primary School is smaller than average. It is located in a suburban area within commuting distance of Bristol but which retains its own identity. Although the school is in Bath and North East Somerset it is very close to the boundary of Bristol and over half of the pupils come from there. The children's starting points in the Reception Year are broadly at the levels expected. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average as is the number known to be entitled to free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are none for whom English is an additional language. The school is part of a Learning Network with five other local schools. Additionally, it has curriculum links with three secondary schools developing science and technology, sports and the arts. One of these secondary schools is developing extended school provision which benefits pupils at the school. It has gained the International Schools Award and has links with a number of schools throughout Europe and in Uganda.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Whitchurch Primary is a good school. The pupils in Years 1 to 6 build on the good provision in the Foundation Stage, where the effective teaching and learning ensure that they meet, and some exceed, the expected levels for their age by the start of Year 1. Overall standards are significantly above average by the end of Year 6. They are well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English. These standards represent good achievement overall but in reading and writing boys do not reach as high standards or make the same progress as girls. The school is aware of this and has developed some positive initiatives to motivate and interest boys. These include the 'Writing between the Posts' project with Bath Rugby Club and significantly improved book resources aimed at boys. This focus needs to be continued to ensure a lasting impact on standards.

Teaching and learning are good. Expectations are high and all staff enjoy good relationships with pupils. However, lessons can lack focus for the more able, which means that the needs of this group are not met fully. This can lead pupils to lose interest and so their progress slows.

Personal development is good. By the time the pupils leave the school they are confident learners who have achieved well. The positive outcomes are a direct result of good leadership and management. The headteacher has formed a very committed team of staff. Pupils enjoy school and learn to live, work and play safely and harmoniously. They demonstrate good knowledge of rights and responsibilities within the school and the wider community. The school is exceptionally successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and provides them with very rich experiences that prepare them very well for their future as young citizens. This is excellently supported through the links with schools in Europe, Uganda and locally. Attendance is satisfactory. Although the school has worked hard to improve attendance with some success, systems do not ensure that the importance of regular attendance is clear enough to parents.

The curriculum is broad and, for example, every pupil at some stage during their time at the school learns to play at least one musical instrument and many learn two. They all learn Spanish and practise this language enthusiastically. Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils' progress is tracked effectively and pupils know how to improve their work and succeed. Staff know the pupils well and take good care of them.

Governors provide good support for the school and have developed effective systems to evaluate its work involving parents in this process. The vast majority of parents are pleased with the work of the school and the progress made by their children. The school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in literacy for boys to match their achievement in mathematics and science.
- Plan teaching more consistently to give further challenge to more able pupils.
- Work closely with parents to raise attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and overall standards are well above average at the end of Year 6. Pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are broadly as expected for their age. In the

Foundation Stage they make good progress, especially in their personal and social development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Girls' achievement is stronger than boys', particularly in writing by the end of Year 2.

From Years 3 to 6, progress is good. At the end of Year 6, pupils achieve results in national tests that are significantly above national averages in mathematics and science. Standards in mathematics and science are consistently high. In English, results are above average but progress is slower overall than in mathematics and science and particularly so for boys. Boys throughout the school do not achieve as well in reading and writing as in other subjects. The school is implementing robust strategies to improve this situation and early evidence indicates that there is an improvement in boys' achievement although this needs to be embedded. The school's use of learning targets and the careful checking of progress are effective. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of the focused support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good overall. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are considerate towards teachers and fellow pupils, seeing positive features of other people. In lessons they enjoy feeling and discussing the wonder in what they are learning. They are enthusiastic about the school's links with other countries, for example, taking pride in their performance of music from other cultures. Children in the Foundation Stage work and play well with each other. Across the school, behaviour is good, and pupils disapprove of the disruptive actions of a very few, mainly boys. There is little bullying and, with pupils' good appreciation of other cultures, there is an absence of racist attitudes. Although pupils' enjoyment of school is good, attendance is only average, in part because of unauthorised holiday absence. Pupils give good attention to staying safe while taking opportunities for exercise, using equipment requested and selected by themselves through the active and democratic school council. They enjoy their healthy meals. Pupils' preparation for future economic well-being is good, with basic skills developed effectively and good systems for making their voice heard.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. In the Foundation Stage staff show a good awareness of the needs of young children across all areas of learning. Teachers throughout the school plan effective lessons which build on pupils' existing skills and understanding, and interest them. In the best lessons work is based on thorough and accurate assessment to inform pupils how to improve their performance and to ensure that activities meet the needs of all. Sometimes there is not a clear focus that will stretch the more able. Where work does not match ability closely some more able pupils complete tasks quickly and accurately and are ready to move on in their learning. If challenging activities are not available for them they can lose interest. Teachers are aware that boys do not attain as well as girls in literacy. More resources and activities specifically designed to motivate and interest boys have been developed but there is still more to do in order to raise attainment to match that of girls. Marking is positive and aligned to individual targets for pupils. Teaching assistants are a valuable asset and work very effectively in support of teachers and pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets statutory requirements while going beyond the basics to broaden pupils' experience. There are very good opportunities to learn musical instruments and the take up is universal. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are well covered both in specific lessons and through reinforcement across other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well served, although planning does not always allow the more able pupils to work at the appropriate rate. The school has good links with local nurseries and secondary schools that allow pupils to make continuous progress. From Reception onward children are able to learn Spanish, which they greatly enjoy throughout the school. There are good opportunities for pupils to take physical exercise, including a popular session before school every morning, and the Reception class is well provided with facilities for outdoor activities. Cycling classes promote road safety. The range of clubs, activities and visits is good, enhanced by links with a secondary school to widen the range of sports.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for, guided and supported. There are suitable arrangements for ensuring their safety, with regular staff training so that everyone is aware of the necessary procedures. All visits and potentially hazardous activities have risk assessments. Children are well prepared for entry to the Foundation Stage, so that they settle quickly. Year 6 pupils have the same level of care given to their transfer to secondary school, including close collaboration between the staffs of the relevant schools. There is a particularly successful link project so that pupils gain confidence entering Year 7 by working in advance on a topic that continues in their new school. Older pupils write a weekly 'letter to teacher' which allows staff to deal with any issues of concern. Staff monitor any children at risk very carefully, supported by external agencies whenever necessary. Pupils know their strengths and areas for improvement in their school work as a result of regular target setting with systematic checks on the extent to which they have improved. This is an important factor in their good progress. Arrangements are fully in place to support pupils with learning difficulties, whose progress is therefore good. Parents are well consulted and informed about issues concerning their children.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is effectively supported by key staff in the senior leadership team. Subject leaders have a good understanding of standards of achievement in their specific areas. Their contribution to school development is thorough and identifies accurately the right areas for improvement. Over time this has resulted in significant improvements leading to well above average standards and pupils' good progress particularly in mathematics and science. There is a clear development plan to raise boys' attainment so that they can achieve as well as girls. However, there are few opportunities for subject leaders to observe teaching in order to monitor improvements. Self-evaluation is accurate and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are highly committed and have put in place good monitoring procedures to evaluate the work of the school. These procedures include

seeking the views of parents, which has led to improvements in information to parents on the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitchurch Primary School, Bristol BS14 0PT

I am writing to thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school when we visited recently and for helping us with our questions. We really enjoyed talking with you and found everything that you said very interesting. I thought you would like to know what we found out about you and the school.

We agree with you and your parents that your school is good. These are some of the things that are good about your school:

- You enjoy school and do well in your lessons.
- You get on well with each other and with the adults in the school.
- You behave sensibly and are kind to each other.
- Your teachers work really hard to help you to learn and make your lessons interesting.
- All the staff work well together to keep you safe and healthy so you feel confident about all you do.
- Your headteacher leads the school well and makes sure that you make the most of your time there.
- The governors keep a close eye on your progress and support the school well.

We have asked your teachers to work on a few things to make sure that you can make even more progress in your learning. These include helping all of you, but particularly boys, to do as well as you possibly can with reading and writing. We know that many boys have enjoyed the new books in the library and the interesting writing work you have been doing. Keep working hard on these subjects. We have also asked your teachers to plan their lessons so that those of you who can do really hard work will have activities that make you think and use your knowledge and skills. This will mean that you make even more progress. Finally, we have asked your headteacher and staff to make sure that your parents understand the importance of you attending school regularly and not taking time off for holidays during term-time.

You can also help to improve your school even more by continuing to work hard and helping each other. We are sure that you will.

Best wishes

Robert Pyner Her Majesty's Inspector