



Whitehall Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109132
Local Authority Bristol, City of
Inspection number 288291
Inspection dates 19–20 September 2006
Reporting inspector David Westall

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Johnsons Road
School category	Community		Whitehall
Age range of pupils	4–11		Bristol BS5 9AT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0117 3773087
Number on roll (school)	435	Fax number	0117 3773088
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Alan Keyte
		Headteacher	Claire Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is situated in an area of high social deprivation in the centre of Bristol. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is well above average, as is the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Over half of the pupils belong to minority ethnic groups and about a quarter speak English as an additional language. Children's standards on entry to the school are generally low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a sound school where staff appreciate and value the pupils and help them to develop into kind, cooperative and caring individuals. The school is a happy and harmonious community where pupils from a wide range of cultures get on well together and enjoy their education. One pupil commented: 'I couldn't wait to get back to school after the summer holiday. I wanted to see all my friends and I like doing my work'.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Although overall standards are significantly below those found in most schools, including in Years 2 and 6, those in English are close to the national average in Year 6. From very low starting points on entry to the school, children make good progress in their personal development and satisfactory progress in all other areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. Despite the sound provision made for all children in the Reception classes, few meet the expected standards by the end of the Foundation Stage. Pupils' progress continues to be satisfactory in Years 1 to 6. However, their progress is variable in Years 3 to 6, with pupils doing much better in English than in mathematics. Pupils' standards have improved in Year 6 in English in recent years, reflecting the school's sustained and effective emphasis on the subject. Mathematics has not received the same attention but the school has sensible plans to rectify this situation.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and the curriculum provides a sound range of worthwhile learning opportunities. Some lessons are particularly well taught but good teaching is not sufficiently widespread. Consequently, pupils' progress is restricted, and is satisfactory rather than better.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. These significant strengths stem from the very supportive relationships that exist across the school. It is clear that pupils like and respect their teachers and that these feelings are reciprocated. As a result, pupils know that their teachers have their best interests at heart and develop a sense of self-worth because they know they are valued as individuals. In these circumstances, it not surprising that pupils feel safe and valued, and that they enjoy school. 'The staff leave no stone unturned to make sure that my son is happy and well looked after at school,' commented one parent. Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite, readily listen to others, accept differences of opinion and know how to have fun together. The school works very hard to make parents aware of the importance of children's attendance. Nevertheless, and despite pupils' good attitudes, the attendance rate is too low.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher is a key strength and is the driving force for improvements in pupils' education. For example, improvements in pupils' progress in English in Years 3 to 6 and the elimination of unsatisfactory teaching owe much to the headteacher's tenacity. However, too much responsibility for setting and achieving the school's goals rests on the shoulders of the headteacher. While staff changes have contributed to this situation, the school's expectations for the monitoring, evaluation and development roles of subject leaders have not always been sufficiently high. As a result, their contribution to the school's

self-evaluation procedures has been limited and their impact on pupils' progress in their subjects has been restricted.

The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection and is aware of its current areas for development. Consequently, it is in a sound position to secure further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics, including by providing more training for teachers and by making sure that effective use is made of assessment information.
- Improve the quality of teaching from satisfactory to better in order to raise pupils' standards.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so they play a bigger part in evaluating and improving pupils' standards.
- Improve pupils' attendance by keeping parents fully aware of the importance of regular attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language.

The results of the national tests in Year 2 in 2005 were significantly below average and the school's provisional results in 2006 were broadly similar. In Year 6, the overall results were also significantly below average in 2005. They showed that pupils had generally made adequate progress from the standards they reached when in Year 2. However, the results were notably stronger in English than in mathematics, and the provisional results in 2006 showed a similar pattern.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

There is a strong community spirit and racial harmony. Pupils work together amicably, enjoy learning and behave well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are safety-conscious and show considerable concern for the welfare of others. They understand the importance of healthy eating and exercise, enjoying fruit and raw vegetables at breaktimes and taking part in a range of physical activities. Pupils have a strong sense of social responsibility and readily involve themselves in fundraising for charities. They respond well when given responsibility, for example, when looking after younger children or acting as 'peer mediators' at breaktimes, and when serving on the active student council. Their satisfactory progress in learning means they are being soundly prepared for their futures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Across the school, teachers plan their lessons carefully and manage pupils' behaviour well. They know what they expect pupils to learn and their explanations are clear. As a consequence, pupils are usually confident about tackling their work. In the most effective lessons, teachers know just when to step in to help pupils and when to stand back and let them work things out for themselves. However, too much teaching is satisfactory, rather than better. Teachers' expectations of pupils' potential achievement are not always high enough, the pace of some lessons slows because teachers talk for too long, and opportunities are missed to check pupils' understanding with probing questions.

Assessment procedures are good but the information collected is used more effectively in English than in mathematics to plan pupils' next steps in learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, including for children in the Foundation Stage. Good provision is made for pupils' personal development and this is reflected in pupils' attitudes and values. Well-judged provision is made for groups of pupils who need extra support or challenge in English, and this benefits their learning. In mathematics, the school recognises that an increased emphasis is required in the development of pupils' problem-solving skills. Pupils have regular opportunities to use computers to support their learning. Provision is sound for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and for those who speak English as an additional language. A good range of activities enriches the curriculum and benefits pupils' learning, including clubs, visits and visitors. These are very popular with pupils. 'It was brilliant. I learned lots about how people used to live,' commented one pupil about a class visit to Roman Bath.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils feel safe and share any worries they may have with staff. Well-judged advice and support benefit pupils' personal development. Child protection procedures are robust and regular health and safety checks are carried out. The school works well with external agencies to provide support for pupils when this is required. Thorough and effective procedures help children to settle in quickly when they start at the school and help to prepare Year 6 pupils for the next stage of education. The support and guidance provided for pupils' academic development is satisfactory. Most pupils know their targets in learning and believe that these help them to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has high expectations for pupils' development and communicates her ideas persuasively so that staff feel strongly motivated. Self-evaluation procedures are sound and the school has a realistic view of its main strengths and weaknesses. Together with the senior leadership team, the headteacher uses a range of robust procedures to check the school's work. However, because the roles of subject leaders are underdeveloped, their contribution to school self-evaluation and improvement is limited.

The school improvement plan includes a wide range of relevant initiatives. It has a beneficial impact, for example, in improving pupils' progress in English. The school recognises that more attention needs to be given to mathematics, and adjustments are being made to the plan to make this possible.

The work of governors is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. However, the governors recognise there is scope to check the school's performance more rigorously, including by more visits to see the school in operation.

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Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Thank you for welcoming us into your school and for being so friendly, polite and helpful. We think that Whitehall School is giving you a satisfactory education. Here are some of the other things we found out.

- You enjoy school, like your teachers and have lots of friends.
- The teachers make sure you are learning OK.
- The staff take good care of you and you know who to go to if you need some help.
- Your behaviour is good and you get on well with other people.
- You have lots of visits, visitors and clubs that you enjoy and that help you to learn.

We have asked the headteacher and governors to improve some things in the school. We want the teaching to be even better and for you to improve your work in maths. We also want some teachers to do more to help the hard-working headteacher to make sure you do well. Finally, we think that some pupils miss too many days at school. This is something you can help with since you know how important it is not to miss your lessons. Thank you again for all your help.