

White Mere Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108362
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	309661
Inspection date	7 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Shepherd

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	
School	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Stuart Green
Headteacher	Mrs Brenda Bentley
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2005
School address	Sherburn Way Wardley Gateshead Tyne and Wear NE10 8BA
Telephone number	0191 433 4004
Fax number	0191 433 4102

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the features leading to the good progress in Reception and Key Stage 1; the effectiveness of the Key Stage 2 provision, including the staffing changes, in the light of the satisfactory achievement reflected in the national data; and the quality of the different elements of personal development. Evidence was gathered from the observation of lessons, playtime and lunchtime arrangements and an assembly. Discussions were held with pupils, including some school councillors, staff, the senior leadership team and governors. Pupils' work, key documents and data including the school's self-evaluation were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail and the school's self-evaluation was used to include judgements where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school predominantly serves the immediate area of private housing, with pupils also coming from several different areas beyond this estate. The social and economic conditions are mixed and are broadly average. The pupils are mainly of White British nationality. There is a slightly higher than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, which has increased in recent years. A higher proportion of pupils than average stay in the school from the beginning of Reception to the end of Year 6.

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 satisfactory school with some good features. Achievement is satisfactory. Children make a good start in Reception and achieve well. They enter the school with skill levels that are typical for their age. By the time they begin Year 1 the great majority have reached the expected levels and more children than usual are above expectations. The overall quality of provision in Key Stage 1 is good. This results in good achievement, and standards that are higher than average by the end of Year 2. Data from the national tests shows that although standards are usually above average, pupils' progress between the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has been no better than satisfactory for the past three years and that it is falling. The inspection confirms that the good progress in the first three years of pupils' time in the school slows to satisfactory in Key Stage 2. This is due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, which ranges from satisfactory to good. In the better lessons there is a lively pace and interesting activities that sustain pupils' interests. For example, a lesson began with the teacher challenging pupils to work out what the lesson content might be with an initial stimulus of one beaker of dirty water and one of clean water. Features of less effective teaching included teachers talking for too long with not enough questions to stimulate pupils' thinking. Tasks for the older pupils do not always match the different pupils' needs and especially the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Although a good proportion of more able pupils reach higher than expected levels in Year 2, they do not consistently reach the higher levels by the end of Year 6 in writing and mathematics and are not making enough progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory with a very mixed picture through the school. This is another significant feature which results in differences in the rate of pupils' progress in the different key stages. In Key Stage 1, there is a very good balance across different subjects with many opportunities used to extend literacy and numeracy in other areas of the curriculum. In Key Stage 2, the balance between the different subjects varies between classes. There are examples of classes having a good breadth to the curriculum, with interesting topics that match pupils' needs and interests well. In other classes there is an imbalance between different subjects and many opportunities are missed to extend and apply literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. A good feature of the curriculum throughout the school is the organisation of pupils into groups of similar ability across Reception, Years 1 to 3, and some less able pupils in Years 4 and 5, to concentrate on developing basic skills in linking letters to sounds and in early spelling skills. The inclusion of teaching assistants in this organisation enables pupils to be taught in small groups which have a clear programme of work that closely matches the needs of the pupils. This strategy results in pupils gaining a firm foundation in reading skills. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities particularly benefit from this strategy and they achieve well. The curriculum in Key Stage 2 for more able pupils is not challenging enough, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. This is due to the good quality support, care and guidance they receive. Parents value the emphasis that teachers put on this aspect of their work and feel that they can talk to them informally about any concerns. Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe and healthy. They understand the importance about a healthy diet and exercise. Pupils enjoy the programme of work the school provides for keeping safe and understand the importance of issues such as road safety, stranger danger and Internet safety. Attendance rates are good. Pupils enjoy the range of clubs that are on offer outside of the classroom. They show obvious enjoyment in many lessons although when the content is

uninteresting their concentration levels fall. Behaviour is good in lessons, around the school and at playtimes. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve in lessons due to the emphasis many teachers put on identifying these points. Pupils like the system of using their individual 'traffic light' indicators to show teachers when they need more help. Contributions to the community are good. Pupils value the buddy system operating in the school and older pupils enjoy taking responsibility for the younger pupils. The school council benefit from their role in helping to make the school a better place. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the range of visitors that come into school, particularly during events such as careers week and links with businesses. This prepares pupils well for their future lives, particularly their economic understanding. For example, a pupil had a very good understanding of setting the price to sell an object based on how much the materials cost. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although management strategies are successful in ensuring that pupils reach higher than average standards by the end of Year 2, leaders do not analyse provision effectively enough in Key Stage 2. This has resulted in the decline of the progress made by these age groups in the past three years. Managers do not use the school's data well enough to set challenging enough targets, particularly for more able pupils. Several parents felt that their children could do better in the school, and some parents felt that there are gaps in the communication systems with them. The school's self-evaluation is sound although some judgements are too generous. Safeguarding systems are in place. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are keen to work with staff to extend their understanding of the school's provision. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception class provides a good start for children both in their academic and personal development. They make good progress across the different areas of learning. This is due to good teaching and the systematic organisation of the curriculum, both indoors and outdoors. The teaching team work very well together and ensure that children's different needs are met. The sessions where staff work with small groups to teach basic skills work very well. The organisation of independent activities is very effective and children use them confidently. Staff work hard to make sure that children begin school smoothly through creating links with the many feeder Nursery settings as well as visiting children's homes. This is the beginning of effective systems that ensure good quality care, support and guidance for each child. Staff assess children's achievement well and use it to plan work that matches different needs and interests. Leadership and management are good. The coordinator has a good understanding of this age group and works hard with a member of the senior staff and the local authority to extend and develop the provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Challenge more able pupils more effectively and raise standards particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning particularly in relation to the use of teachers' questioning.
- Extend the use of literacy and numeracy across different subjects.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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Annex A

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

10 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of White Mere Community Primary School, Gateshead,

NE10 8BA

Thank you for being so very welcoming to me when I came to your school. You were friendly and helpful in answering my questions. I am writing to let you know what I found out.

You receive a satisfactory education at your school. You make a good start in Reception and you have a very interesting curriculum in this class both indoors and outdoors. You reach higher than average standards by the end of Year 2. The organisation every day in the younger classes where you learn about letter sounds and improve your spelling, is working well. Although your progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 2 it is not as good as in the earlier classes. Those of you who reach the higher standards in Year 2 do not always get work that is difficult enough for you. I have asked that the school improves this, and you can do your best to work hard at the more difficult work. The teaching and learning and your curriculum are satisfactory, although there are some good examples in different year groups. I have asked the school to think about how these things can be improved so it is all at least good. In some classes you use your literacy and numeracy well in other subjects and your school is going to make sure that you get more chances to do this. You can play your part in developing these skills whenever you can.

Your personal development is good throughout the school. You have a good understanding of keeping safe and healthy and you try hard to make sure you come to school every day. Your behaviour is good, whether you are in your classrooms, around the school or in the playground. You obviously enjoyed all the different things you learnt in careers week and you learnt a lot about the world of work. You contribute well to your community, particularly when you are being buddies and making decisions in the school council.

I really enjoyed my visit to your school and I wish you all the best for your future education.

Yours sincerely

Maggi Shepherd

Lead inspector