

Whitegate CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111338
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310570
Inspection date	27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	119
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Lesley Eden
Headteacher	Mr Ian Percival
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Whitegate Northwich Cheshire CW8 2AY
Telephone number	01606 882006
Fax number	01606 889511

Age group	5–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement, including achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Key Stage 1 and the sustaining of improvements to achievement in Key Stage 2; the impact of the school's new tracking system on target-setting and teachers' use of assessment to plan work that matches pupils' needs. Also evaluated was the quality and impact of the school's monitoring and evaluation and the accuracy of self-evaluation.

Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation; national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; observations of the school at work; discussions with pupils and representatives of senior staff and the governing body; a scrutiny of school documents and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Whitegate Church of England is smaller than most primary schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low and very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. No pupil is at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average but does vary greatly between year groups. There is EYFS provision for Reception aged children in the mornings, and in the afternoon they join younger Year 1 children. The school has many local and national awards including a Healthy Schools Award and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features, including pupils' outstanding personal development, the very high standard of care and the wide range of opportunities available to pupils. Its work is at the very heart of the local community and the outstanding partnerships with local people and parents contribute significantly to pupils' well-being. The strong Christian nature of the school is reflected in the pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are very clear about what is right and wrong and have developed a strong sense of justice. Racism is not tolerated and pupils get on very well together. Activities in the curriculum, such as a recent focus on Africa, help pupils to understand other cultures. A strong tradition of fund-raising for national and local charities reflects the pupils' generous natures. Pupils respond very well to the school's system of rewards and they are very keen to have their excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to work acknowledged by getting their names into the Golden Book. Their attendance is excellent. The mature way pupils are able to understand, and empathise with others, was demonstrated very well in a lesson about the characters of Oberon and Puck in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. Pupils were able to play the role of the characters and demonstrate the way these characters thought through their sophisticated responses to their classmates' challenging questions.

Achievement is good and standards are typically above average. Pupils make good progress from their individual starting points and by the end of Year 6 reach above average standards. In 2007, standards dipped slightly but unvalidated data and inspection evidence show that standards at the end of Year 6 improved in 2008 to above average. Pupils in the current Year 6 are on course to reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 2. More pupils are reaching the higher levels in all three subjects. Standards in English have improved significantly, reflecting the school's focus on writing. Nevertheless, the school is aware that standards of writing still do not always fully reflect pupils' excellent oral skills and their very good depth of understanding when reading. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are well supported. Pupils' above average academic standards combined with a terrific work ethic and excellent social skills mean they are very well placed to achieve success in the future.

Teaching and learning are good, particularly in the EYFS and Key Stage 2. Even though there are mixed age classes, the school makes a good effort to ensure that pupils are regularly taught English and mathematics in discrete year groups. Teachers have very well-developed questioning skills and work hard to expand pupils' abilities to think for themselves and be creative. Lessons in Key Stage 2 are particularly challenging because of this level of questioning. Although achievement is good in Key Stage 1 it is not quite as strong as that in Key Stage 2. This is because the work set for pupils in Key Stage 1 is not always as finely matched to pupils' individual needs as the work that is set in Key Stage 2. There are many parent volunteers and their sterling work, particularly in listening to pupils read, has helped to underpin pupils' good progress in reading. Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils understand their targets well and use them to improve their work in lessons. For example, younger pupils were carefully referring to their targets and ensuring that they had a finger space between each word when writing. Pupils' work is marked carefully and the comments in English books are helping pupils to improve their writing. Parents recognise that the pastoral care the school provides is outstanding and many remark on the 'friendly, approachable' staff. Pupils say their teachers

are 'just great' and are very confident that staff will quickly sort out any problems they have. Safeguarding procedures are in place.

This relatively small school provides an excellent curriculum that features a fantastic range of enrichment opportunities, which are greatly appreciated by both parents and pupils. The well attended clubs range from musical activities to sport and information and communication technology. Very good provision for art is reflected in the super displays, which include ceramic models that were completed during a recent residential experience, and work inspired by a professional artist produced by one of the art clubs. No wonder the pupils say they 'love' their art lessons. The school's good links with local secondary schools has enhanced the provision for modern foreign languages. The recent Golden Skills Day was praised by pupils and their parents. All this ensures that pupils' enjoyment of school is exceptional. Pupils are understandably proud of their school and make a very significant contribution to the lively community. They take on a plethora of responsibilities that range from acting as art technicians to being members of a very active school council. The Healthy Schools Award is important to the pupils and they are enthusiastic about the healthy food on offer at lunchtimes. The new Golden Mile on the school playing field has also been enthusiastically embraced with some saying they are going to walk it on a regular basis. Pupils' excellent understanding of how to keep safe is demonstrated by their good work as road safety officers.

Good leadership and management have secured a harmonious community where the care for pupils' personal needs and support for their personal development are outstanding. The headteacher and deputy headteacher complement each other well, each bringing different but important strengths to the school. They are well supported by a very hard working and experienced staff. The checking of pupils' progress has improved and pupils who are in danger of underachieving are quickly identified and receive effective support. In addition, those who are achieving extremely well are also identified and offered activities that offer additional challenge. The school understands where its strengths lie and has identified where it needs to improve, but some aspects of the checking of the school's work lack rigour because they are too informal. For example, subject coordinators have looked at pupils' work and discussed the outcomes, but the impact of their hard work is compromised because they have not recorded their conclusions or the actions they have taken to secure improvements. Governors are very involved in the school's work and are very committed. They have worked hard since the previous inspection to improve their skills so that they are now able to provide the school with more effective challenge. The quick recovery from the dip in standards last year and the rising standards in English demonstrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well because teaching is good. Inspectors agree with the headteacher's judgement that children often start school with skills that are generally above age related expectations. They are usually very confident and articulate but this year there are a higher proportion of children with summer birthdays and their skills are closer to national expectations. By the time they join Year 1, their skills are well above national expectations, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development, and standards in all areas of learning are rising year-on-year. Children play and work well together and respond enthusiastically to teachers, and this greatly aids their learning. Teachers work hard to encourage pupils and model answers. The curriculum is based strongly on the requirements of the EYFS but the immediate physical environment limits outdoor provision. Nevertheless, good use is made of the delightful

school grounds by taking the children on autumn walks in the woods. Parents are very pleased with the quality of provision in the EYFS, typically commenting on how their children have come on in 'leaps and bounds' because of the experienced and attentive staff. Good leadership and management have meant that the school has kept abreast of recent developments in Early Years' provision and meets the new welfare requirements effectively. The positive outlook and determination of the EYFS leader means that provision is poised to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of pupils' writing.
- In Key Stage 1, develop a closer match between the work set and pupils' ability levels.
- Ensure the processes that underpin the school's self-evaluation are rigorous.

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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?	2
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

It was a delight and a privilege to inspect your school. I really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say. It's clear that you have a brilliant time at school because of all the exciting things you have to do. It was good to hear that you know lots about keeping healthy and safe. I was very impressed by your outstanding behaviour. You have very good manners and make visitors very welcome indeed. It was pleasing to see the way you think of others, and you have worked very hard raising money for charity and sending gifts via the Shoe Box appeal.

You told me that your teachers look after you very well and that they always try to help you. The Reception children are doing well because they are taught well and have lots of interesting things to do. The standards you reach are higher than those reached by pupils in many other schools. You make good progress because of good teaching, but also because you all work very hard indeed. I noticed that you speak very well and have very good reading skills but your skills in writing are not quite as good, so I have asked your teachers to help you improve. There are lots of exciting, challenging lessons for the older pupils, but sometimes in Years 1 and 2 the work can be a bit too hard for some and too easy for others. I have asked your teachers to think about how this can be improved. You told me you really enjoy your art lessons and I also noticed some fantastic art work displayed on the walls in school. The residential visits sounded very exciting. Lots of you attend school clubs including the choir. I thought your singing in assembly was absolutely super.

Leaders and managers have worked very hard to make your school a good one with some outstanding features. I have suggested that they keep an even closer check on how well the school is doing.

Thank you again for being such good company.