

Whitwell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112649
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE LA
Inspection number	310965
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Derek Pattinson

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ken Stevenson
Headteacher	Mr Vic Wilkinson
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2002
School address	Southfield Lane Whitwell Worksop Nottinghamshire S80 4NR
Telephone number	01909720251
Fax number	01909720251

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school serving an area of below average economic advantage. Most pupils are White British and live in the village and its immediate area. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is close to the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average. An above average number of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school has no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school holds the Active Mark, Artsmark, Basic Skills Mark III and an anti-bullying award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms the school's judgement that this is a good school. Its successes owe much to strengths in leadership, management and teaching. Parents think highly of the school, and appreciate the high quality care the school takes of their children. The head teacher's outstanding leadership has ensured that the school's track record of improvement is good. It is constantly seeking to implement systems, arrangements and procedures to help drive up standards. As a result, it has a strong capacity for continued improvement.

Foundation Stage provision is satisfactory, with some good elements. However, the school recognises that the current organisation with separate Nursery and Reception classes, which are not adjacent, leads to a lack of a uniform approach. This prevents children from making the best possible progress.

Achievement is good in Key Stages 1 and 2 and standards are above average. When children enter the Nursery their skill levels are below average. By the end of Reception standards are average, except for literacy skills, which are still below expected levels. When pupils leave Year 6, standards are above average in mathematics and science, but are still a little below average in English. The school has introduced measures which are starting to make a positive impact in driving up standards in writing, especially for boys, although there is still much to be done. Pupils, including those with specific difficulties, achieve well because of good teaching, high quality support and good relationships which enhance learning. Where teaching and learning are at their best, lessons are challenging and enjoyable and pupils achieve well. In a small number of lessons the pace is not brisk enough and pupils have too little time for independent work, which slows learning.

As a result of the high quality care, guidance and support, pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. However, the multicultural dimension is less well developed. Pupils love school and like their teachers, which helps to explain the above average attendance, their excellent behaviour and mature attitudes. They find almost all lessons interesting because the curriculum is diverse and varied and caters well for their needs. Visits, visitors and a wide range of clubs help extend their experiences. Pupils know what they must do to succeed because of the good arrangements for guiding them on their academic performance. Assessment procedures are good because the school is constantly checking on what pupils know and understand. However, information and communication technology (ICT) is not given enough attention to help develop essential skills.

The head teacher has succeeded in establishing an effective climate for sustained improvement. Arrangements for raising standards further are now rigorous and increasingly embedded in the school's work. Senior managers strive to give pupils a good education. The governing body plays its part in actively supporting the school and holding it to account. The school is successful in promoting the importance for pupils of keeping fit, healthy and safe. Pupils are well prepared for the world of work because most important skills, such as literacy and numeracy, are given strong emphasis. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make satisfactory progress as they move through Nursery and Reception because of the sound early years provision. They transfer into Year 1 with attainments in line with national

expectations, although early language and literacy skills remain relatively weak. Personal, social and emotional skills are developed well, laying secure foundations for future learning. Staff work together to plan a varied range of activities that facilitate learning. Teamwork between teaching and support staff is good. Teaching is always at least satisfactory. Targeted 'focus group' activities effectively ensure all children make at least satisfactory progress. Children behave well because most learning is fun. Good quality assessment information is starting to be used with greater precision than in the past to meet the needs of individual children. Occasionally, however, activities do not provide enough challenge, particularly for more able children. The school has identified the need to establish a unified Foundation Stage unit. This is required because the distance between the nursery and reception classrooms does little to aid consistency and cohesion, particularly in teaching and learning styles. In addition, not all children have regular enough access to large play equipment or the outdoor learning area to extend their skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in writing.
- Establish a consistent and cohesive approach to Foundation Stage provision.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to use computers to extend their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good overall. The standards they reach are above the national average in mathematics and science, but are below national levels in English. Over recent years, pupils' standards in reading and mathematics in Key Stage 1 have steadily risen. Standards have also risen in writing, but more slowly and from lower starting points. However, achievement over time has been good overall as pupils have moved through Years 1 and 2. Across Key Stage 2, achievement in English is satisfactory, but it is good in mathematics and science. Here too standards have risen over recent years in mathematics, science and English. Challenging targets contribute to the mostly good achievement. Pupils with specific difficulties are supported well, and make similar progress to other pupils because of the good quality help they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Attendance is above average because pupils enjoy school immensely. As one pupil commented, 'This is the best place ever'. Behaviour and attitudes are outstanding and pupils treat each other with care and respect. Older pupils relish the many opportunities on offer to develop responsibility by becoming prefects or 'playground pals'. Playtimes are fun packed social occasions. The school council displays a mature approach towards its work. Good quality sports' opportunities have a high level of participation because pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and enjoy being active. They show a good appreciation of staying safe. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although pupils' preparation for life in a multicultural society is less well-developed. By the time pupils leave, most have acquired secure academic and satisfactory independent skills for the next stage of their education. They develop a good understanding of life in a wider community through their active fundraising for a range of charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Secure relationships, effective management of pupils and high levels of care successfully underpin the good teaching and learning. Pupils find most lessons interesting, challenging and fun. Teaching is especially successful when time is used to good effect, teachers give pupils much encouragement and tasks are demanding to help them enjoy learning. In these instances, pupils find their learning experiences interesting and challenging and make good progress. Teaching assistants contribute very well to the quality of pupils' learning, especially pupils with learning difficulties. In a small number of lessons, the pace is not brisk enough, teachers do not allow enough time for pupils to practise new learning and there are missed opportunities for them to develop ICT skills. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is good because it usually indicates what they must do next to help them improve. Effective procedures are in place for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress. However, occasionally assessment is not used well enough to match work to pupils' precise needs to enable them to make the best possible progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There are effective links between subjects to help pupils understand the purpose of what they are learning. A wealth of initiatives to raise standards in writing through, for example, the use of 'punctuation pyramids' is starting to prove successful. Both boys and girls enjoy writing. However, pupils do not always receive enough sustained writing opportunities to help drive up standards. Although information and communication technology is improving, it is not yet an integral part of pupils' learning. Strong emphasis on developing both personal and academic skills ensures pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The high quality work of the learning mentor ensures that pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities have total access to the curriculum. French enhances the quality of the school's good curriculum. There is a good range of extra curricular activities, such as Spanish, gardening and circus skills, which helps to develop healthy and varied lifestyles and pupils' contributions to the wider community. Visits and visitors add greatly to pupils' enjoyment, help bring learning to life and broaden pupils' horizons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good with some outstanding features. The school shows very good commitment to the welfare of its pupils. Very robust procedures, including those for child protection, ensure pupils' safety is paramount. Systems for vetting staff and visitors meet with the latest national guidelines. Staff know families very well. Pupils and parents greatly value the level of care shown to them. Those with specific needs receive high quality support. Initiatives, such as the behaviour improvement programme, have proved very effective in supporting pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. An effective programme to support pupils with special talents is developing well, but is in its infancy. Academic guidance has a high profile in the school's work. Systems for monitoring pupils' progress and tracking their academic achievement are rapidly becoming embedded in the school's work to help identify

pupils who need extra support. Pupils know what they must do to reach the next step in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. However, the head teacher provides outstanding leadership. He is supported well by the deputy head, all staff and the governing body. As a result, strategic planning and organisation are of high quality. Parents appreciate the head teacher's approachability and consider him to have injected a new lease of life into the school. The senior leadership team's impressive knowledge is reflected in the school's self-evaluation, which is honest and accurate, and increasingly takes the views of staff, governors, parents and pupils into account. As a result, identified priorities are the right ones and are pursued rigorously to help the school move forward. Data is analysed thoroughly and progress carefully tracked so that pupils falling behind are targeted for immediate improvement. Lesson monitoring focuses clearly on learning as well as teaching so that it is of maximum benefit to teachers. Inclusive and shared leadership are positive features of the good leadership and management. For example, subject leaders are being empowered and energised, and are steadily becoming skilled at monitoring the school's work and performance. The governing body is well led, well informed and works in close partnership with the school. As a result, it increasingly plays its part in holding the leadership to account.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 January 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Whitwell Primary School, Whitwell, nr Worksop, S80 4NR.

Thank you very much for making Mrs Campbell and I so welcome in your school. We really enjoyed talking with you and visiting your lessons. After visiting your school for two days we now fully understand why you like your school so much. We thought that you would like to hear what we found out about your school because there are many really good things happening here.

- You make good progress as you move through the school.
- You love school and attend regularly because teachers, teaching assistants, and other adults are friendly and work hard to give you a good education.
- You get on very well with one another and with adults and your behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Your lessons are often interesting and exciting, and there are visits and visitors organised to help you learn and develop new skills.
- Your teachers and other adults help you when you have problems, make sure that you are safe, and encourage you to stay fit and healthy.
- You have a very good headteacher who has made lots of changes for the better. Together with all staff, he makes sure that you are happy and successful in school.

Your parents are right to think that you go to a good school. We have asked the school to do the following to make it even better.

- Help you to improve your writing in order to raise standards.
- Provide more opportunities for you to use computers to help develop your skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Ensure that children in Nursery and Reception are taught in one unit to help ensure all have the best possible start to their school life.

Thank you for being so helpful when we inspected your school. It was really good to find that you are happy and doing well.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Derek Pattinson

Lead Inspector