

White Rock Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113216
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	311159
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Harvey
Headteacher	Nigel Furness
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2004
School address	Davies Avenue Paignton TQ4 7AW
Telephone number	01803 843175
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school mainly serves the local area. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. A lower than average proportion are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Children's attainment on entry generally matches the level expected of children for their age. The school holds the following awards: Artsmark Gold, International Schools Award, Sport Active, Healthy Schools and ECO School. There have been many changes in teaching staff in recent years. Currently, the headteacher is on a part-time secondment to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and leadership of the school is shared with a 'Partner Headteacher'.

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 that is improving rapidly. It has a few outstanding features. The high quality pastoral care and excellent range of creative and stimulating learning opportunities provided by the staff represent the heart of the school. The pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being, particularly their enjoyment and wholehearted commitment, reflect the successfully enriched life blood of the school. Good teaching and learning enable pupils to attain above average academic standards, which represents good achievement by the time they leave. Many parents express their appreciation of these attributes, one typical comment being, 'We are absolutely delighted with the quality of schooling our children receive, as well as the facilities and staff.'

Care, guidance and support and the curriculum are good overall but have some outstanding features which develop pupils' personal attributes very effectively. For example, curricular enrichment through imaginative, creative, stimulating topic studies and excellent extra-curricular activities promote the pupils' enjoyment and well-being superbly. Pupils are fully involved, undertake many forms of responsibility as part of their personal development, and make full use of the school's good facilities. Consequently, pupils attend and behave well, really enjoy school, and adopt safe practices in an exemplary fashion. Increasingly, pupils are also encouraged to evaluate their academic work, which is helping to raise standards.

For a time, largely due to continued changes in teaching staff, the school's focus on developing pupils' skills in mathematics and science slipped and standards declined. In recent terms, the experienced and astute headteacher, aided closely by a capable 'Partner Headteacher', has instilled a strong unity of purpose between staff, governors and parents, and, increasingly, by the pupils themselves. There is a strengthened emphasis on raising standards and pupils' skills, and additional time has been allocated to mathematics and science. These have already brought substantial improvement.

Teaching and learning are good. Children are taught well and make good progress in the Foundation Stage. Good teaching continues through the school and ensures that pupils develop a love of learning and make good progress. By Year 6, standards are above average in all aspects of English and in mathematics. Many pupils also develop above average skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and in the expressive arts and sport. Standards are broadly average in science. Even so, the skills of some more able pupils in solving mathematical problems and when investigating in science are not fully developed.

Leadership and management are good. Self-evaluation and procedures for setting targets promote improvement effectively. Carefully considered, separate leadership and management teams represent strengthened features. However, some of these teams, and the electronic tracking of pupils' progress, are relatively recent initiatives and are not yet functioning with equal effectiveness in lifting standards. Secure strengths in pupils' achievements in English, outstanding promotion of pupils' personal development and recent success in lifting standards in mathematics, in particular, show that the school has a good capacity to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is led well, and provision and children's achievement are good. Children settle quickly because of the good induction process. Teachers and their assistants track

children's progress effectively and keep parents well informed and involved. Parents are very satisfied with the way their children are welcomed and adapt to life in school. They say their children really look forward to coming to school. Good teaching enables the children to make good progress and on entering Year 1, most have achieved the learning goals set for their age. Many do even better in social and emotional development. Planning is detailed and good adult-led and child-initiated activities are organised, including satisfactory use of the outdoor area. However, the outdoor space is not yet fully developed and children have too few opportunities to choose activities outdoors for themselves, which limits their ability to learn independently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' enquiry skills in mathematics and science, especially those of the more able pupils.
- Strengthen the way staff track pupils' progress to raise their own and pupils' expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and most pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points. Standards and achievement are rising in response to good teaching and challenging targets. After a period of declining standards in mathematics and science, pupils' progress has accelerated because of increased teaching time and greater emphasis on developing basic skills in these subjects. Children achieve well in Reception classes because of sharply planned and supportive teaching. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2. Good progress continues throughout Years 3 to 6. By Year 6, standards are above average in English and mathematics and are broadly average in science. Although pupils' skills continue to improve, at times, the problem solving and investigative skills of more able pupils are not developed sufficiently. However, many pupils show high levels of skill when using computers, during conversation and when undertaking expressive arts and sporting activities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

'There is nothing boring about this school,' exclaimed a Year 5 pupil, describing succinctly how pupils feel about their school. Pupils enjoy the range of opportunities provided and develop a love for learning, reflected in good attendance and punctuality. Pupils throughout the school are eager to learn. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as shown by excellent relationships throughout the school. Pupils are friendly and polite, and show increasing confidence. They thrive on the encouragement they receive to evaluate their own work. They live up to their excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles. Pupils talk expertly about healthy eating and the value of exercise, and participate fully in the wide range of physical activities. They make an outstanding contribution to school and community life, for example, as members of the school council and the SNAG (School Nutrition Action Group), helping everyone enjoy school. Older pupils derive much benefit from an excellent range of enterprise activities, including organising events. The pupils' excellent personal development and good academic achievement prepare them well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is typified by a good emphasis on extending pupils' thinking through careful questioning, often by using interactive whiteboards, and by the way staff value pupils' contributions. Increasingly, lessons generate pupils' interest, for example, as in Year 4, when writing about imagined aliens. The teaching of English is a strength. Teachers develop pupils' speaking and listening skills very effectively and involve them beneficially in evaluating their own work. As a result, pupils work hard and enjoy what they are doing. Teachers make good links with previous work, build on pupils' ideas and promote new learning well. Occasionally, in mathematics, even though pupils are taught in classes based on ability, whole-class sessions continue for too long and pupils have limited time to develop their own lines of enquiry. When this happens, some pupils, especially the more able, are not challenged enough and progress slows. Teachers mark pupils' work effectively and give good oral guidance.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has outstanding features, not least excellent enrichment, which includes learning Spanish, a wide range of clubs, visits and educational links with several countries. Pupils have many opportunities to develop life and workplace skills, for example, learning how to organise and perform in school productions and run a restaurant for an evening. These help to prepare them well for the future. Literacy and ICT skills are developed well and enhance learning in other subjects. In many ways, particularly by stimulating creativity and pupils' enjoyment, the curriculum is 'ahead of the game'. This approach continues to be very successful in promoting pupils' communication and personal skills. Over the course of last year, the school rightly realised that its emphasis on topic work had contributed to a decline in pupils' mathematical and scientific skills. To correct this, more time has been allocated to these subjects and skills are now taught in a more discrete and effective manner, so accelerating pupils' progress. However, they have not been in place long enough to lift pupils' problem solving and investigative skills to the full.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Outstanding pastoral care is underpinned by the way that all staff care about the pupils, value their contributions and involve them in the life of the school. This highly effective 'package of care', much praised by parents and the community, includes innovative ideas such as considering risks when planning school trips and acting as 'peer mediators' to pupils who have problems in the playground. These go hand in hand with more traditional, but equally effective, school rules and expectations of good manners and behaviour, and promote pupils' personal qualities very successfully. Procedures for safeguarding pupils' well-being, including care for vulnerable pupils, are excellent. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met effectively. Academic support and guidance are good, especially in Years 5 and 6, where pupils use computers to reflect about what they have learned and to evaluate their own work. At times, more able pupils are not always given sufficient guidance to reach their best as they move through the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, who is well supported by senior colleagues, has steered the school successfully through a difficult period of change. In addition, his vision and great skill in establishing a stimulating curriculum accessible to all pupils and emphasising pupils' personal qualities have been crucial in the school's continued development. The headteacher receives good support from the 'Partner Headteacher' and from staff with well considered areas of responsibility. Staff at all levels work well together, helping pupils not only to achieve but also to enjoy school. Governors give effective support. Good links with parents and outside agencies also support pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. Good self-evaluation ensures that priorities for improvement are identified accurately and subsequently achieved. However, relatively new strategies for tracking pupils' progress are not yet implemented with sufficient consistency by all staff and this constrains expectations and achievement of some more able pupils.

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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	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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	2
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

9 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of White Rock Primary School, Paignton, TQ4 7AW

Thank you for the warm welcome you all gave us when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting and talking with many of you. We agree with you, your parents and your teachers that White Rock is a good and very caring school. These are the main things we found:

- The standards you reach in Year 6, especially in English, are better than those found in most schools. They show that you are being taught well and make good progress.
- You really care highly for each other, behave well and have an excellent understanding of how to live healthily and safely.
- All the adults in the school appreciate your efforts, especially your enthusiastic contributions to the school and your community. The staff work well with your parents and with other people to make sure that you are safe and happy at school.
- Your headteacher is a very experienced and talented leader who works very closely with the 'Partner Headteacher' to make sure that you are looked after extremely well. All the staff and governors work well as a team to make sure that you have an exceptional range of learning opportunities, enjoy your time at school and achieve well.

To help the school to become even better, we have asked the headteachers, staff and governors to do these things: help some of you to do better when solving problems in mathematics and investigating in science. We have also asked the teachers to strengthen the way they track your progress to help everyone expect and achieve even more.

The headteachers, staff and governors know what needs to be done to improve the school and plan well to do this. We believe that if you continue to work hard and give of your best then standards will rise further.

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you again for your kind assistance and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter Lead inspector

Annex B



9 February 2008

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Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter
Lead inspector