

Whitby Heath Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 111087 |
| Local authority | Cheshire West and Chester |
| Inspection number | 325293 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 May 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Mr Frank Carruthers |

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 392 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr William Clowes |
| Headteacher | Miss Gill Morris |
| Date of previous school inspection | February 2006 |
| School address | Wyedale Whitby Ellesmere Port CH65 6RJ |
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, the school's improvement partner and groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school improvement plan, school policies, teachers' planning and assessment files and records of pupils' progress, including individual education plans for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The 128 parental questionnaires returned were also read and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well pupils are achieving in classes across the whole school
- how effective initiatives have been to improve teaching, learning, assessment and the curriculum in order to raise standards
- the impact the senior leadership team, subject leaders and governors are having on the overall performance of the school.

Information about the school

This larger than average community primary school is situated in a residential area about a mile from Ellesmere Port town centre. About half of the pupils come from outside the immediate area. Nearly all pupils are White British with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. Of these, very few are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Less than 10% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two classes of Reception-aged children. Since the time of the last inspection there has been a change of headteacher. The new headteacher took up post in April 2008. The school has gained the Silver Activemark and is working towards the Inclusion Award. There is a privately-run breakfast and after-school and holiday club which is subject to a separate inspection.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and is showing recent, rapid improvement after a period of declining standards since the time of the last inspection. Standards have risen since last year, when results in Year 6 national tests were well below average, so that they are close to the national average in the current Year 6 classes in English, mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory progress overall for these pupils.

These improvements have been brought about by the concerted effort of staff during the current school year under the strong leadership of the headteacher. The commitment of all to drive up standards is good. However, because the full impact of improvements is yet to be realised, the school's capacity to improve is judged to be satisfactory rather than good. The school's self-evaluation procedures are robust and as a result draw an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This bolsters the school's capacity to improve.

Pupils' progress and achievement are satisfactory overall. Children start in the Reception classes with attainment that is broadly in line with that expected at this age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage thanks to good teaching and a varied and rich curriculum. By the end of the Reception Year, children's attainment is generally above expected levels, although broadly average in communication, language and literacy. Across Years 1 to 6, achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils now reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6 and this represents satisfactory progress from their starting points.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the very few learning English as an additional language make good progress thanks to the school's thorough monitoring of how well they are working towards their targets and the good support they receive from staff. However, not enough of the more able pupils are reaching the high standards they are capable of because they are not always challenged well enough. All pupils develop a good awareness of their personal safety and how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is good and they display good attitudes to their learning.

The quality of teaching and the use of assessment are satisfactory overall. Good practice is evident in many lessons but there are inconsistencies in the level of challenge, the effective use of time and the quality of marking. These inconsistencies prevent pupils' achievement from being better than satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory with good features, some of which are relatively new and in the process

of being embedded, for example, the focus on helping pupils to understand how they can acquire skills and knowledge. The school's care, guidance and support for pupils are strengths and very evident in the quality of the support given to pupils from more vulnerable families and those with additional needs. Partnerships with other schools, for example associated secondary schools and agencies to improve pupils' learning are good. Given the satisfactory outcomes for pupils and quality of provision, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

A small proportion of schools where overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of under performance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further

- Ensure that all of the more able pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 achieve their potential by:
 - improving the level of challenge for these pupils
 - making better use of subjects such as information and communication technology (ICT) to help promote skills of investigation and research.
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is at least good in all lessons, and the use of assessment by removing inconsistencies in:
 - the level of challenge
 - the effective use of time
 - the marking of pupils' work: so that all marking helps pupils to know the next steps in their learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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| 3 |
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Attainment in Years 2 and 6 shows an improvement over last year's national assessments and test results and this is because of important improvements to pupils' learning. In English, pupils are taught to write stories, reports and articles and to use these skills well in other subjects. In mathematics and science, they learn to solve problems and carry out investigations. In all year groups the pupils' progress is at least satisfactory and sometimes it is better. Pupils collaborate well with one another in lessons and this assists their learning. This was evident, for example, when Year 3 pupils had to find partners and create new sentences using link words. Pupils show interest and enthusiasm in lessons. For instance, when an element of competition was introduced into a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils responded well. A focus on teaching pupils how to learn is helping them to gain independence in their studies, though there are still some aspects yet to develop fully, for example, using ICT more effectively for research so that the more-able pupils reach their full potential. The performance of girls and boys broadly matches the national picture and the very few pupils from different ethnic backgrounds perform as well as their classmates.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. These aspects are promoted well by the curriculum and by the responsibilities pupils are given in school. The school council, head boy and girl, house captains, junior road safety

officers and play leaders all contribute well to the school community. The pupils' involvement in the local community, for example, in improving the local park and their work supporting charities, is also good. Levels of attendance have been in line with the national average each year since the last inspection and unauthorised absence is low. The same is true of the current year.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 3 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 3 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress | 2 |
| How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning? | 3 |
| To what extent do pupils feel safe? | 2 |
| How well do pupils behave? | 2 |
| To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles? | 2 |
| To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community? | 2 |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being? | 3 |
| What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development? | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

There is a balance of good and satisfactory lessons across both key stages. In good lessons, the objectives are clearly explained to pupils, teachers' use of questioning is carefully planned and paired discussions among pupils involve them in their learning well. Occasionally the teacher pitches the pupils' activities particularly well to cater for the different levels of attainment. However, in some lessons this is not sharp enough and the more able are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers do not always make the best use of time. For example, pupils stay too long all together on the carpet with the teacher so there is not enough opportunity for pupils to be engaged in follow-up activities. A focus this year on improving the assessment and tracking of pupils' performance has been effective and procedures are now good. The use of this information, however, does not always clearly transfer to teachers' planning and so the challenge in some lessons is not well pitched. Similarly, marking, though supportive, misses the opportunity to guide pupils in what the next steps are.

The curriculum has been developed in recent years to include a thematic approach that links subjects together well and helps pupils' understanding. It also provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of literacy and numeracy. The school has begun to address how the curriculum can help to push on the more able, gifted and talented pupils, for example, through better use of ICT in other subjects. There is more to do and this is why the curriculum is not judged to be good overall. There is a good range of enrichment activities, plenty of clubs and a residential visit for pupils to enjoy, and the personal development of pupils is promoted well through lessons in personal, social and health education.

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The school provides particularly good pastoral care which enables pupils to feel confident, happy and safe. Good links with pre-school settings and secondary schools help pupils when they transfer. Parents of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are involved well in supporting them. A few parents responding to the inspectors' questionnaire felt they did not receive enough information on how their child is progressing. The school is currently trialling new arrangements to offer parents more frequent consultations.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The quality of teaching | 3 |
| The use of assessment to support learning | 3 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 3 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

In the short space of time since her appointment, the headteacher has tackled the earlier, worrying decline in the school's outcomes and established the commitment of all staff towards raising performance. Senior and middle managers form a team that is accountable and responsible for its actions and makes an effective contribution to decision making. The upturn in pupils' attainment is clearly evident in the progress of pupils in all classes, although there remains more to do to iron out inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and to improve the achievement of the more-able pupils. The school now tracks well the performance of all groups of pupils to promote equality of opportunity but not enough of the more-able pupils reach their potential. The school's monitoring and promotion of all aspects of safeguarding the pupils' welfare is good. Governors are supportive and have a sound grasp of the school's strengths and areas to develop. However, they rely too heavily on senior staff for their understanding of the school's performance. The school takes an active role in helping the local community come together, for example, in local events and community projects, but has yet to forge links with schools with more diverse ethnic groupings.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 3 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 3 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 3 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including effective leadership, enables children to make a good start to their education and to become happy and receptive learners. They make good progress and achieve well, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. By the end of the Reception Year, attainment is above expectations for the age group in most of the areas of learning. It is in line with expectations in communication, language and literacy. Children gain significantly in confidence and enthusiasm for learning during their time in the Reception classes.

The overall quality of teaching is good and teaching stimulates learning well. The curriculum provides activities which are well matched to the children's needs and which bring them interest and fun. Daily sessions focusing on letters and sounds are helping to boost early reading and writing skills and this has started to impact positively on children's achievement in literacy. Indoors the setting is attractive and well resourced and children benefit from the arrangements to share space and resources between the two classes. The outside area is used satisfactorily to take the curriculum out of doors. Because it is relatively small, however, its use is timetabled and it is not possible for children to have free-flow access throughout the day. In addition to this, there is not enough space for large climbing equipment, a sand pit or an area where children can dig. These factors limit the scope of experimental and adventurous learning out of doors and are a major reason why the provision is not judged outstanding.

Good arrangements are in place to ensure children's welfare and children are happy and secure in the setting. They interact well with each other and enjoy warm relationships with the caring staff. Parents say they appreciate the good care provided for their children. The key stage leader and her effective team work together well to promote the children's progress and well-being. Vulnerable children, those with additional learning needs and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language, are all supported well. Children's progress is observed carefully and assessment is systematic, so that additional support is given promptly to those who need it. Good links with external agencies promote children's health, welfare and progress.

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| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitby Heath Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 128 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 392 parents and carers registered at the school. This is a good rate of response. A large majority of parents are very positive about the work of the school and their children's progress and well-being. Frequently emphasised was the view that the staff are very caring in their approach and inspectors agree. A few parents consider they are not kept well informed about their children's progress and this is an aspect the school is currently reviewing. Some parents commented on the urgent need to upgrade the kitchen and replace the two mobile classrooms. The school is in consultation with the local authority on these matters and plans to replace the kitchen are at an advanced stage.

| | Always | Most of the time | Occasionally | Never |
|--|--------|------------------|--------------|-------|
| Overall I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 90 | 28 | 7 | 0 |

Three returns gave no judgement

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
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| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate. |

Common terminology used by inspectors

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| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Progress: | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |

22 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitby Heath Primary School, Ellesmere Port, CH65 6RJ

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit very much. You told us that you feel happy and secure in school and that it is a friendly place to be. You talked a lot about how you find lessons interesting and enjoy learning new things. You said you are looking forward to getting a new kitchen and dining hall and I know from talking to your headteacher that should be soon.

Now we would like to share with you what we thought about your school. Your school is giving you a satisfactory standard of education. These are some of the things that are good about it:

- all the staff take good care of you and help you all to be fit, safe and healthy
- you are growing into sensible students who want to learn and take on responsibilities well, for instance as school councillors, junior road safety officers and play leaders
- your behaviour in class and around school is good
- you know a lot about how to stay safe and lead a healthy, active lifestyle
- those of you who find school work difficult are helped to do as well as you can by teachers and classroom assistants.

Part of our job is to make suggestions about how the school can be even better. There are two things we have asked the staff to do:

- challenge the more able and talented pupils among you so that they all do as well as they can
- make sure that teaching always challenges you to achieve your best and that teachers always mark your work in a way that helps you to know what the next steps in your learning are.

You have a part to play in this: know your targets, work hard in lessons and do your very best! Most important of all, carry on enjoying school!

With every good wish to you all for the future

Frank Carruthers
Lead inspector

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