

Whitchurch Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123009
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	327828
Inspection dates	5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	John Collins

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 (total)	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Mike Holland
Headteacher	Mrs Dawn Chesters
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2006
School address	Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames Reading RG8 7EJ
Telephone number	01189 842347
Fax number	01189 842347

Age group	5-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, and particularly investigated:

- standards and achievement
- the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning of mathematics in Key Stage 2
- the effectiveness of the leadership at all levels in promoting personal and academic development.

Evidence was gathered from an analysis of pupils' test results, current assessment and tracking data, and observation of lessons. Parents' questionnaires, discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, governors and pupils also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included in the report where appropriate.

Description of the school

Almost all pupils at this smaller than average primary school are from a White British background. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups, those eligible for free school meals and those speaking English as a second language are low. The proportions of pupils who have special educational needs or specific learning difficulties are well below average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in a Reception class. Extended care is provided through privately funded breakfast and after school clubs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Whitchurch Primary school is an outstanding school where all pupils make excellent progress and reach high standards. Both parents and pupils hold the school in high regard. One parent echoed the thoughts of many when he wrote, 'I have no concerns about my child in this wonderful school'. One of the prime factors in the school's continuing success is the outstanding leadership and management of the new headteacher. She is very ably supported by senior staff and a well-informed governing body that both supports and challenges the school. Together they are providing the drive and vision to take the school forward. Leadership and management at all levels are outstanding and make an appreciable contribution to both the academic and personal development of all pupils. Subject leaders have a very clear view of the strengths and areas for development in their subjects. Governors are very aware of the direction in which the school is moving and play a very positive role in holding the school to account.

The attainment of children on entry to the school varies considerably from year to year due to the small numbers involved. This is a common feature of small schools. From broadly average starting points the great majority attain high standards by the time they leave the school. This represents outstanding achievement. Outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps children to make an excellent start to their school life. By the end of the Reception class, the great majority have exceeded the learning goals expected of them. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are building well on this exceptionally good start to their education. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above average by the end of Year 2 for all groups of pupils, including the higher attainers. By the end of Year 6, most pupils are attaining high standards in English, mathematics and science. The school has successfully addressed a dip last year in mathematics at the end of Year 6. The school's assessment information shows that most pupils are well on track to attain high standards this year in all three subjects. The continuing high standards predicted by the school's rigorous and comprehensive tracking data for 2009 were reflected in the very good progress seen in lessons during the inspection.

Pupils make such exceptional progress because teaching and learning are of outstanding quality. Excellent relationships underpin the exceptionally good quality learning that was seen across all classes. Lessons are very well planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Behaviour is good and very well managed. Exceptionally good questioning not only helps pupils to qualify and explain their answers but promotes personal development outstandingly well. Pupils very quickly gain confidence in voicing their opinions, which in turn raises their self-esteem. Very good opportunities are taken to promote pupils' speaking and listening skills, and teaching assistants play a major part in helping pupils to achieve above-average standards in English. Well-timed and very effective interventions support the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and those who have language and speech difficulties, enabling them to play a full part in lessons.

The personal development and well-being of all pupils are outstanding. This is because leaders are not only focused on raising standards but also on promoting pupils' personal development. As one parent explained, 'This school provides a happy and enthusiastic environment for children to learn and develop'. There are very many opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities around school, which help them develop a strong sense of being part of the community. The school council and the buddy system make a very positive contribution to the daily life and smooth running of the school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding overall. Pupils demonstrate an exceptionally well-developed sense of caring for each other and for others less fortunate than themselves. They readily take the initiative in fundraising, and Year 6 girls have, for example, organised a 'learn to dance' class in the morning break time for younger pupils. Pupils are very proud of their school, one saying to the inspectors, 'I'm sure you will have a lovely day!'

The school's planning for community cohesion is good and is evident in the very good relationships that have been developed with the local village community. However, pupils have a less well developed awareness of multicultural communities beyond their immediate experience. Attendance is above average, reflecting how much pupils enjoy coming to school. They like their teachers because '... they aren't boring and make learning fun'. All pupils show a very good understanding of what it means to make healthy choices and greatly appreciate all the sporting activities that are such a strong feature of the school.

There is no complacency and teachers are constantly developing the outstanding curriculum. Plans for a new creative curriculum and a 'Phonics International Programme' are already well advanced. An excellent range of clubs and activities contributes very well to pupils' academic and personal development. Physical education and sporting activities, artwork around the school and the teaching of French are notable strengths in the curriculum. Very good links are made between different subjects but the school acknowledges that not enough had been done in improving pupils' skills in information technology. This is currently a major focus in the school development plan. By the time they leave school, pupils are equipped with very good skills in literacy and numeracy to prepare them for the future.

One parent described the school as '... providing a very friendly and caring environment'. Many wrote to express their sense of 'the family feeling in the school'. Care, guidance and support provided for all pupils are outstanding. Pupils themselves say they feel safe and secure. Safeguarding and health and safety systems are robust and help to provide a safe and secure learning atmosphere. Extremely thorough monitoring of pupils' performance enables needs to be quickly identified and tackled successfully. Pupils receive very good guidance based on the tracking and assessment of their progress but occasionally marking does not always highlight what they have to do next in order to improve.

Inclusion is outstanding. The school is very successful in addressing the needs of different groups of pupils, enabling them to attain exceptionally well in relation to their starting points. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and those who have specific learning difficulties is excellent. The school is very good at making use of outside agencies to support its more vulnerable pupils. This, along with rapid interventions when needed, ensures these pupils make the same progress as their classmates. Very effective links with the pre-school group and secondary schools ensure a smooth transition between different stages.

The school's track record at sustaining high achievement, and school leaders' very clear view of what needs to be done next, mean the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage means children make an excellent start to their education in the Reception class. They settle very quickly due to the very good links between the pre-school group and the Reception class teacher. On entry, children's attainment is broadly average, being generally above what is normally expected in their personal development but a little below expectations in language and early writing skills. In a warm, friendly and supportive environment, children develop as confident and well-motivated learners. Relationships and behaviour are excellent and children have a very good understanding of right and wrong. Children make rapid progress because of a very well-planned creative curriculum with an excellent balance between adult-led activities and child-initiated play. There is an extensive range of facilities both indoor and out, and well-planned visits and visitors make learning relevant and fun. Pupils regularly visit a local Forest School where they learn about the natural environment. Good links are made between the areas of learning. For instance, children were involved in playing in an ice cave, writing postcards from Antarctica and exploring the properties of artificial snow. Teaching is outstanding because staff understand extremely well how young children learn. They know their children well and use this highly effectively to plan challenging and exciting work. Adults engage children in meaningful conversations to encourage discovery, extend speaking and listening skills and develop mathematical understanding. Leadership and management are outstanding, ensuring that children make excellent academic and personal progress. Leaders have high aspirations for children and they evaluate provision continually. Assessments are rigorous and used consistently to plan next steps in children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend planning for community cohesion so that pupils are able to have a better understanding of different multicultural communities beyond their immediate experience.

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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?	1
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	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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	1
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	1

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whitchurch Primary School, Reading, RG8 7EJ

Thank you for being so helpful when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. You are well behaved and polite and told us how proud you are of Whitchurch Primary School. Your school is outstanding.

These are some of the things your school does particularly well.

- The headteacher, teachers, governors and all the other adults who help are doing an outstanding job in running the school.
- You are making excellent progress in your reading, writing, mathematics and science because you have very good teachers and classroom helpers.
- The school does an outstanding job of looking after you.
- The younger children in the Reception class make a very good start to their time in school because they have such outstanding teachers and helpers who take very good care of them.

In order to make you school even better, I have asked your teachers to:

- help you to learn more about the customs and beliefs of the many different kinds of communities in our own country and other countries around the world.

You can help by continuing to try hard in all you do and enjoy your time in school. Remember to ask your teachers if you need help; we are sure they will help you to make even better progress.

Good luck in the future.

Yours faithfully

John Collins
Lead Inspector

