

Whitleigh Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132215
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	341316
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Grahame Sherfield HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	347
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Vernon Pinches
Headteacher	Mr Ian Cording
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 November 2006
School address	Lancaster Gardens Whitleigh Plymouth PL5 4AA
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils and looked at key school documents, such as the improvement plan and the minutes of meetings of the governing body, and 76 questionnaires returned by parents.

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

- whether the fall in standards has been arrested, and how well the pupils are currently making progress
- how successfully the school is improving teaching
- how well the curriculum enables pupils to improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy and their personal development
- how well the governing body carries out its role in challenging and supporting the school.

Information about the school

This large school serves a mainly White British community where an above-average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above average. The school is part of a federation on a campus completed in 2008 that includes a sports college and a residential special school. There have been two periods of acting headship since the last inspection. The current headteacher and the deputy headteacher took up their posts in September 2008.

Breakfast and after-school clubs and childcare for those under three on the school site are managed by other providers, and are subject to a separate inspection.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievement and standards. The governing body's safeguarding procedures do not meet requirements as they do not demonstrate that appropriate vetting of new staff joining the school since 2006 has been carried out. The school's overall effectiveness is inadequate.

The school suffered from significant disruptions in its leadership from 2006 to 2008 with two short-lived acting headships. In these years, standards in Year 2 and Year 6 were consistently low, with those in Year 6 falling significantly. The progress pupils made from Year 2 to Year 6 during this period was inadequate. A new headteacher took on the leadership of the school in September 2008 and, with the support of the deputy headteacher and the staff, has halted the decline. There has not been enough time yet for the measures taken to have fully tackled all the problems that had developed. Although results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2009 showed an improvement in standards and better progress, attainment remained low and progress was still inadequate. Despite some further improvement, this is still the case.

Many of the foundations for significant improvement are in place. The atmosphere in the school is positive and caring. Pupils behave well and enjoy their work, responding well to the increasing opportunities to work in engaging contexts that are relevant to them. They report that they feel safe and that bullying is rare and effectively dealt with by the staff. Much of the teaching observed by inspectors was good and none was unsatisfactory. Teaching is improving but remains satisfactory overall because it is not yet consistently good enough to result in pupils making significantly better progress. In weaker lessons observed, the pace of learning was sometimes slow and pupils needed more help in organising themselves to undertake group activities. The curriculum is satisfactory and increasingly adapted to meet pupils' needs. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start and are well placed to respond to the efforts of the staff to improve progress in Years 1 to 6. Parents are strongly supportive of the school.

Rigorous and accurate monitoring by the headteacher and staff has resulted in clear and appropriate priorities for the school's future development. It benefits from

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leadership in depth provided by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, with a strong senior leadership team and subject leaders, and from valuable assistance from the local authority. The staff share a firm commitment to the significant improvement needed in the standards pupils reach and the progress they make. The decline of the last few years has been halted and challenging targets are in place. Consequently, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress so that by the time of the Year 6 national tests in 2010, 67% of pupils have made two levels of progress in English since the end of Year 2 and 68% have achieved this in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching to the level of the best by ensuring that all staff enable pupils' learning to progress rapidly at all times and structure activities more effectively when pupils are working in groups.
- Ensure that safeguarding procedures meet the requirements to demonstrate that all new staff appointed since 2006 have been appropriately vetted.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Relationships are good, both amongst pupils and between pupils and adults. As a result, pupils often enjoy their work in classrooms within a positive atmosphere. They are keen to make progress in their lessons, responding well to the interesting activities often provided, for example developing their mathematics skills to design packaging following a visit to a factory. They are thus well placed to take full advantage of the school's strenuous efforts to make significant improvements in their progress.

The pace of progress has improved over the last year as a result of the determined action of the school's leaders and staff, but from a very low level. The school's data, confirmed by observations during the inspection, show some early impact of this in better progress in Years 1 and 2 and in Year 6. Progress in mathematics presents some particular problems, which the school is working hard to overcome. The legacy of past underachievement is significant and gaps in previous learning continue to restrict most pupils' progress. The school's data indicate that attainment and progress are set for a further improvement in 2010 but progress is likely to remain unsatisfactory overall and attainment well below average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as a result of the additional support they receive, and more able pupils make similar progress in response to the improving teaching and the provision of activities that challenge them.

Pupils have a good awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, including taking plenty of exercise. They make a sound contribution to the school community and can contribute ideas through the school council. Pupils understand and respect each other's views and have a good grasp of how to get on well together in their

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classrooms. Attendance has improved in response to the school's concerted actions but remains below average. Pupils have developed good team-working skills and are increasingly proficient in reflecting on their own progress. However, their low standards in literacy and numeracy mean that skills for their future economic well-being are inadequate.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly when working with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils appreciate the good marking which gives clear indications of what is needed to improve. Teachers involve pupils in assessing their own work and that of their classmates, and this provides further guidance on how to do better.

The good teaching observed was characterised by a brisk pace and effective use of the interactive whiteboards to support pupils' learning. Real efforts are made to find interesting starting points to engage pupils and to help them see the relevance of their learning. Where teaching was satisfactory, sometimes teachers talked for too long before pupils started their activities. While pupils often worked well in groups initially, they needed more help in using the time available to best effect.

The curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils enjoy the opportunities for visits and for residential experience and there is a high level of participation in the good range of extra-curricular activities. Considerable

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

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attention is given to planning a range of engaging opportunities to develop basic skills across the curriculum. Pupils respond well to these but there has not been sufficient time for this to be reflected in significantly better progress in English and mathematics. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Pupils are well cared for in the friendly and supportive atmosphere of the school. Actions taken to engage families who find it difficult to work with the school have had some success, and the number of persistent absentees has fallen.

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support is inadequate, however, because of a shortcoming in the safeguarding procedures.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: 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	4

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff work well as a team and the headteacher and the deputy headteacher have established a real commitment to the improvement of the school. Subject leaders for English, mathematics and science play an important role in leading improvements in pupils' progress and identifying areas of strength and in need of development. The governing body understands the school's strengths and weaknesses and is strongly supportive of the headteacher's actions in bringing about improvement. But it has failed to ensure that its safeguarding arrangements comply with regulations for safe recruitment, and the governors' role in monitoring and evaluating these procedures is unclear.

The progress made by individual pupils is carefully tracked so that underachievement can be identified quickly and appropriate action taken. The school does sound work to ensure all pupils have an equal opportunity to make progress and achieve as well as they can, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It can show some improvement where it has targeted its actions. It satisfactorily ensures that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times. The contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has a strong sense of community and is developing good links with the local area, including other establishments on the campus. It provides opportunities for pupils to understand other cultures through its curriculum and is developing links with a school in Uganda. However, the school recognises that more should be done to promote pupils' understanding of diversity in Britain.

The school has good partnerships with a range of external organisations which help

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to extend the opportunities for pupils, both in their work and in their personal development. Good examples of these are the effective involvement with a local Pathfinder scheme and the multi-agency approaches used to support individual pupils when required.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children join the school their skill levels are generally low, particularly in language, communication and social development. They make good progress in all areas of learning, although their skills in language and knowledge and understanding of the world remain weak when they move on to Year 1.

The children benefit from the well-organised and stimulating environment in the Nursery and Reception classes, which form a cohesive Early Years Foundation Stage unit. They are happy, enjoy their learning and feel secure in a caring environment where all welfare requirements are met. Children get on well together and most are increasingly confident and independent learners. Planning addresses all areas of learning thoroughly and teaching is good, with particular attention paid to meeting the needs of individuals in carefully constructed groups. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-selected activities, although leaders have correctly identified that staff do not always take opportunities to intervene to develop number skills when children are working independently. The staff work well together and responsibilities for planning activities and caring for children are shared appropriately.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good, with a clear and accurate view of the unit’s strengths and its areas for development. Assessment of children’s progress is thorough. However, current arrangements do

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not provide easy access to an overall picture of their progress and this has also been identified as an area for attention.

The partnership with parents and carers is good and they are very positive about their children’s experience in the Nursery and Reception classes. They feel confident about coming into school to talk informally and contribute information on their children’s progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Analysis of the questionnaires returned by parents showed that most respondents were happy with children’s experience at this school. Most believe their child enjoys school and the school keeps children safe. Inspection evidence indicates that these positive views are justified. Most parents and carers believe their child is making enough progress. But inspectors found that although the school is working hard to improve matters, the progress made by most pupils is not good enough at present. A small minority of parents and carers are concerned about behaviour but inspection evidence does not support these concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whiteleigh Community Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 76 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 347 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	55	29	38	5	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	50	35	46	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	34	45	34	45	8	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	45	33	43	9	12	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	51	30	39	6	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	38	50	31	41	7	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	45	38	50	4	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	29	38	38	50	5	7	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	32	42	38	50	6	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	28	38	50	15	20	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	25	48	63	5	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	37	41	54	6	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	36	47	34	45	6	8	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



13 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Whiteleigh Community Primary School, Plymouth PL5 4AA

Thank you for your involvement in the recent inspection, particularly for the friendly and open way in which you talked to us. We enjoyed visiting your school and agree with you that it is a happy, friendly place.

Here are some of the positive things we found out about your school.

- You enjoy school and behave well.
- The teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory and improving.
- The youngest children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- The school cares for you well, so that you feel safe and know a lot about how to keep healthy.

However, at present the progress you make is too slow and the standards are not as high as they should be by the time you leave school. Because of this, we think that at the moment your school is not providing you with a satisfactory standard of education, so it is being given a notice to improve. This means that other inspectors will visit to check how things are going. The governors, your headteacher and the other staff are determined to make significant improvements, and have already started to take action. But there has not been enough time yet to make the improvements they want. The governors have not been as careful as they should have been in recording the checks made on new staff and we have asked them to sort this out.

We have asked the school to help you to make faster progress in English and mathematics by ensuring that all the teaching is as good as the best. You can help by doing as well as you can and making the most of the help that the staff give you.

Thank you again for your involvement in the inspection and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector

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