



Whale Hill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111635
Local Authority Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number 289008
Inspection date 21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Linda Buller

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sandsend Road
School category	Community		Eston, Middlesbrough
Age range of pupils	3-11		TS6 8AD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01642 454339
Number on roll (school)	567	Fax number	01642 454339
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Phillip Meadows
		Headteacher	Mrs Norma Newell
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Whale Hill is a much larger than average primary school. The local area has high levels of social deprivation. The proportion of pupils who claim a free school meal is well above average. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are well below those typical for their age. Most pupils are White British with very few from minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupil is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although in the last two years there has been a much larger number of pupils in Year 6 who have needed help with their learning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

In this outstanding school, everyone's first priority is maximising achievement to attain high academic and personal standards. Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage due to outstanding provision. All staff are determined that by the time pupils leave this school they will have all the basic skills needed to be able to compete on a level playing field with those who are more socially advantaged. To this end pupils learn exceptionally well in a safe, supporting, yet challenging environment. They flourish as individuals and visibly grow in stature in lessons where they make excellent progress to reach above average standards by the time they leave Year 6.

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. From the moment they enter school, pupils are fully involved in a range of activities that they find stimulating and fun. As pupils say, 'it is never boring at Whale Hill'. As a result, behaviour is excellent and pupils know how to stay safe. They get on very well and say bullying is extremely rare with 'buddies' and staff always on hand to help sort out differences if they do fall out. Pupils are aware that staying healthy is important but there is still some way to go before this is fully reflected in the lifestyle choices which they make. The school agrees that bringing about improvement in this area of pupils' personal development is a priority; for example, not all pupils experience the recommended two hours physical education each week. The care and support for all pupils, including those with gifts or talents or learning difficulties and/or disabilities are outstanding. This is one of the reasons why pupils make excellent progress, whatever their ability.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. All staff share a common sense of purpose. They readily accepted the challenge from the last inspection to raise standards in English, mathematics and science and have done so even beyond their own high expectations. They have achieved this by working together to plan, carry out and evaluate the effectiveness of lessons and the progress made by pupils. They very effectively share their subject expertise and are always ready to learn from one another.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and is highly respected by parents, pupils, staff and governors. The very effective system of delegated management means that all staff are focused upon raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of pupils. The excellent process of self-evaluation, although modest in its judgements, provides the school with an accurate view of its strengths and staff know what works well. Despite the significant improvement in standards over the last three years, staff are never complacent. They are constantly planning what needs to be done next to ensure that each new group of pupils achieves as well as the last. As a result, the school provides excellent value for money and the capacity to improve further is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, but standards remain below those expected by the time they enter Year 1. The very good start pupils make in the Foundation Stage, especially in their personal development, means that pupils are ready to learn. Outstanding teaching in Years 1 to 6 builds on this very successfully, and consequently the rate of progress increases steadily. As a result, in the 2005 national tests the Year 6 pupils attained standards above the national average in English, mathematics and science. The school's analyses of their 2006 results indicate that standards have continued to rise with more pupils than previously attaining the higher Level 5. The school's excellent tracking and support systems ensure that boys and girls do equally well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same outstanding progress as their peers. For example, many attain the expected Level 4 in English by the end of Year 6; this is one of the reasons why standards overall are continuing to rise.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They love coming to school and, as a result, levels of attendance have risen and are now above average. In response to the high expectations of staff, behaviour is excellent. Pupils take their responsibility for their own school community and wider world issues very seriously. They are indignant, for example, that their posters reminding parents that the school grounds are a no smoking area are sometimes ignored. They discuss with confidence issues such as world poverty and the need to conserve energy. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school aims to nurture in pupils a spirit of belief and self-confidence based on the guiding principle that if they 'aim for the stars they may just hit the ceiling'. In this they are highly successful. Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. It is a sight to behold when 15 minutes before the start of the school day classrooms in Years 3 to 6 are filled with pupils deep in concentration, solving mathematical problems. Pupils confirm that they do not feel pressured to attend but do so because they love school and enjoy the challenge. The comment of one parent summarises those expressed by many when she wrote, 'I asked my child if it had been a good day at school, he replied that every day is a good day at Whale Hill'. The parent concluded 'it says it all'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Everyone in school works as part of a highly skilled team recognising that pupils learn in many different ways and they plan

meticulously to ensure that every individual need is met. Teachers say that if standards are to continue to rise then teaching can have no weak link. With this in mind, staff training is exemplary; all the staff take every opportunity to learn from each other and refine their skills. In this way all adults are able to have the maximum impact on pupils' learning.

The pace of lessons is often staggering, pupils are well aware of teachers' high expectations and not a minute's learning time is wasted. This is only possible with the high quality support provided by teaching assistants who follow the same 'can do' culture of teachers. As a result, pupils of all abilities leave this school as young citizens of whom the school and parents are rightly proud.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. The school has worked hard to amend the curriculum to make sure that it offers excellence and enjoyment for all the pupils. As a result, a wide range of exciting activities captures their interests and inspires and challenges them to learn. Teachers skilfully weave literacy and numeracy into almost everything pupils do. For example, in art and design, Year 1 pupils label their aquariums and when in the playground pupils are encouraged to invent games which include practice of their times tables.

Pupils' personal development is central to the school's work. Initiatives such as Shakespeare 4 Kids enrich the curriculum and build self-confidence. In many lessons, the use of modern technology motivates pupils and prepares them very well for their future. Recent curricular priorities aimed at improving pupils' understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise are beginning to have a positive impact but are not yet fully embedded. For example, the school has not yet been able to ensure that all pupils experience the recommended two hours per week physical education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are outstanding. The school's belief that every pupil, whatever their ability, can achieve well underpins every aspect of its work. Procedures for safeguarding children follow government guidelines and are implemented thoroughly and consistently by staff. Governors keep a close eye on health and safety issues and have been instrumental in many improvements to the school building.

Whether it is in lessons, small groups or one to one, pupils receive all the help they need to achieve the standards of which they are capable. Pupils say they are confident that their teachers want the best for them. This can be seen in teachers' marking of pupils' work where praise and encouragement are linked to targets for improvement. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, higher attaining pupils rightly see themselves as the mathematicians of the future. This is because throughout the lesson their teacher

refers to them as such, tells them how well they are doing and consistently challenges them to go one step further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The inspirational headteacher leads and manages the school with vision and flair. Her highly effective system of delegation enables phase and subject leaders to manage their responsibilities very well. They monitor standards throughout the school and track the progress of pupils meticulously. As a result, the headteacher has up-to-date, accurate information regarding the progress of each pupil at her finger tips. Together with very well informed governors, she is then able to ensure that each pupil receives high quality teaching, an exciting curriculum and the support and guidance they need to reach high standards. The success of this is evident in standards which have risen year on year over the last three years and pupils who are happy, confident learners.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and 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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

The quality of provision

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

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Whale Hill Primary School

Sandsend Road

Eston

Middlesbrough

TS6 8AD

21 September 2006

Dear Pupils

I really enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for sharing with me all the wonderful things that you do. You helped me to understand how the school works and what makes it so outstanding. I agree with you that your headteacher and all of the adults in your school are great. They are always thinking of interesting and exciting things to help you learn. This is why you all enjoy school and behave so well.

You and your parents told me that this is a very caring school where you all feel safe and secure because you know your teachers want the best for you. You are right, as your headteacher says 'if you reach for the stars, you may just hit the ceiling!' It was good to see that you are beginning to make healthy choices about what you eat and that some of you are now having more physical education lessons. I have asked your teachers to make sure that you do more activities that will help you to understand why this is so important. You can help them with this when you are at school or at home by always choosing to do those things which are good for you.

Thank you again for being so helpful and I hope you continue to enjoy your wonderful school.

With best wishes

Linda Buller

Lead inspector