

Whitehills Primary School

Acre Lane, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, NN2 8DF

Inspection dates 23–24 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school's outstanding improvement since the last inspection is due to the exceptionally skilled headteacher and very effective school leaders who have secured high-quality teaching throughout the school.
- In English and mathematics, pupils have made outstanding progress in the last two years as the school accelerated their learning. This is a rapid improvement since the last inspection, when rates of progress required improvement.
- Much of the teaching is outstanding in all years and in most subjects. Teachers plan and teach lessons that enable pupils to learn exceptionally well.
- Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils. They successfully capture pupils' interests and fire their imagination. As a result, all groups of pupils make excellent progress and their achievement is outstanding.
- Since the last inspection, greatly improved teaching and highly effective training for all staff have led to sharply improved rates of progress and much higher attainment for all groups of pupils.
- The senior leadership team rigorously check the quality of teaching. This means that all teachers know what they do well and what needs improving so that pupils' needs are fully met.
- Leaders, governors and staff have secured excellence in nearly every aspect of the school's work since the previous inspection, including teaching and achievement.
- Governors are extremely well informed about all aspects of the schools' work. They check on the work of all leaders and challenge them to meet highly ambitious targets for all pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are polite, caring and courteous and their strong attitudes to learning ensure they make outstanding progress. Pupils say they feel very safe and that they are very well cared for.
- The exciting curriculum and many enrichment opportunities on offer ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development flourish in this school.
- Children in the early years learn exceptionally well because of the excellent teaching and support they receive. The well-resourced, vibrant and stimulating environment ensures that children are productively occupied and learning at all times. As a result, they are extremely well prepared for entry into Year 1.
- The school has worked successfully to improve the quality of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics. Whilst standards in other subjects are high, the school has not yet improved teaching to the same outstanding quality equally across all subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in a wide range of lessons and activities led by teachers and teaching assistants. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors observed assemblies, lunchtimes and playtimes, and pupils arriving at and leaving school.
- Discussions were held with pupils, parents, teaching and other staff, school leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books, listened to pupils read and talked to them in every class about their work.
- The inspectors took account of the 71 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and the 18 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors also obtained the views of a number of parents bringing their children to school.
- The inspectors observed the school at work and considered a range of documentation. This included school and other data on pupils' progress and attainment, school improvement planning and the school's work to judge its own performance. In addition, the inspectors looked at minutes of governing body meetings and documentation relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

St.John Burkett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Herminder Channa	Additional Inspector
Helen Atkins	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Whitehills Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of the pupils are White British. A minority are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups.
- A very low proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium. This is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in care.
- One seventh of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs, which is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Children start school full-time in the Reception classes.
- Whitehills School shares part of its site with the nursery school, which is independent of the school and is subject to a separate report. Approximately two-thirds of children starting in the school's Reception class each year transfer from the nursery school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the highly effective teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is employed in all other subjects across the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, school leaders and governors have a clear strategy and relentless drive to improve standards. Inspirational leadership and a relentless pursuit of excellence are the main reasons why pupils' achievement is outstanding.
- The headteacher is exceptionally skilled and has extremely high expectations of staff and other leaders in the school. He communicates his high expectations convincingly to staff so that all have a shared sense of direction and feel part of a successful team.
- The school has rigorous systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning which contributes to the outstanding teaching. Leaders provide clear guidance to teachers and teaching assistants on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and raise standards further.
- Subject leaders and those with specific areas of responsibility, rigorously track how well pupils are doing and put support in place for any pupil who falls behind. They have a clear understanding of their role in raising achievement and accurately check on how well teachers are performing, and so help them to improve the way they teach.
- All teachers and teaching assistants have clear targets for improvement, which are monitored regularly. This has had an exceptional effect on raising the quality of teaching and learning across the school since the previous inspection because everyone knows exactly what is required of them. The management of teachers' performance and salary progression are linked closely and effectively to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. There are exemplary systems for checking up on any concerns and members of staff are thoroughly investigated before appointment. They are also very well trained to care for the pupils. The school has established close links with the parents so that responsibility for the pupils' safety is shared. One parent said, 'The staff really get behind you'. Members of staff are very vigilant in ensuring that pupils are protected and kept safe.
- The school strongly discourages discrimination of any kind and gives pupils equal opportunities to succeed, irrespective of their background or abilities. The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used exceptionally well. One-to-one support and subsidised access to various activities, enable these pupils to do as well as other pupils both academically and socially.
- The new curriculum is well developed and supports learning very effectively across all subjects. Consequently, pupils do very well in all subjects including reading, writing and mathematics. The school has developed and implemented its preferred approach to assessment of the new curriculum, and pupils' achievements are checked with other local schools to ensure accuracy.
- Activities to promote pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain are widespread, for example outings to a mosque and visits by magistrates. Together, with the many other opportunities offered by the school to take responsibility through becoming a 'junior warden' or a school councillor, this contributes strongly to the schools' excellent spiritual, moral social and cultural education.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged achieve equally as well as other pupils in their class. This is due to the extra support they receive which ensures that they make excellent progress in English and mathematics.
- The school works very well with parents, and in the local community and with other schools. The headteacher uses his expertise to help other schools and works closely within the cluster of schools and with the nursery school with which the school shares a site. The school is increasingly using their partnership with the Fairfield's Teaching School Alliance to develop the quality of teaching.
- Parents told inspectors how much they appreciated the support the school gives them when there is a

problem, and how they appreciate the ease with which they are able to talk to teachers. A number of parents told inspectors that it was a happy school with happy staff and children. One parent commented on Parent View, 'I would consider a career change if I could teach in a school like this'.

- A number of new initiatives have been successful in raising achievement. For example, pupils participate widely in physical education and sports, and this raises their self-esteem and helps to support improvement in their academic performance. The school makes excellent use of the primary school sports funding, increasing participation in school sport and taking part in inter-school competitions.
- The local authority has a positive impact on improving the school and provide an appropriate level of support so that the school has become highly successful.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a very clear understanding of the school's effectiveness, including the quality of teaching and the data relating to pupil's performance, because the headteacher ensures it is given the important information it needs in a way which enables it to carry out its role well.
 - Governors are very knowledgeable, professional and skilful. The governing body shares the high expectations of the headteacher and senior leaders and provides strong support and challenge. Governors carry out their statutory duties diligently, making sure that the headteacher's performance is rigorously assessed through annual objectives. Governors manage the budget effectively and check how closely pupil premium funding is used in the school and its impact on pupils' progress.
 - Governors are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They take the management of teachers' performance seriously and regularly check the performance of staff and its link to pay so that they can reward good teachers with salary progression. Governors attend training regularly and make sure that all statutory duties are met, and regularly audit their impact.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This makes a major contribution to their outstanding achievement.
- Staff agree that pupils' engagement in the vast majority of lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are enthusiastic and articulate learners with a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning, strongly supportive of each other's views, feelings and abilities.
- Pupils display consistently positive attitudes to learning, whether with a teaching assistant, class teacher or in assembly. They take great pride in their school, and its appearance, and talk enthusiastically about their learning and achievements. Inspectors visited every class, and found pupils' behaviour to be impeccable in all, as well as around the school.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are smart in their uniforms and keep the school neat and tidy. They are particularly proud of the displays around the school which they have helped to create.
- The school has a well-established behaviour management policy which has led to the current calm and friendly atmosphere. Pupils say that behaviour in the school is excellent. Parents' response in Parent View is overwhelmingly positive about behaviour in the school.
- The school successfully fosters very good relationships; pupils are courteous, respectful and well mannered, and display outstanding behaviour throughout the school day. Pupils' enjoyment of the school is reflected in the high rates of attendance. Pupils told inspectors they could not think of any way to make the school even better, and that they couldn't wait to get to school each day. All staff, including those supervising lunchtimes said that they are able to build positive and productive relationships with pupils due to the excellent organisation around the school throughout the day.
- Parents and pupils repeatedly said that the headteacher, teachers and other staff always listen carefully to what they have to say and are interested in each individual. They are always easy to find to speak to and

quick to sort out any issue.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils say that the best thing about the school is how safe they feel. Due to the school's excellent teaching, they also have a strong awareness of how to keep themselves safe out of school, including when out playing in the local area or walking to school. The school undertakes rigorous procedures, including risk assessments, to ensure all health and safety measures are in place, both on and off the school site
- Pupils are very well aware of different forms of bullying, including the use of derogatory language, e-safety and cyber-bullying. There have been very few incidents of bullying or poor behaviour or serious incidents. Pupils told inspectors that instances of bullying of any kind are extremely rare, but the school is quick to act in such circumstances. The school is very effective at tackling any form of discrimination.
- All parents responding to the online survey Parent View agreed that their children were happy, safe and well looked-after.
- The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills in a safe and stimulating environment, both at the beginning and end of the school day and in additional activities, such as 'fabulous fitness' or the 'Mile Club'. The school's emphasis on spiritual, moral, social and cultural education has helped pupils to get on well together and to help each other learn. Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility, for example, by becoming a 'playtime pal', who help younger pupils at lunchtime.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught very well. Teachers have very high expectations regarding pupils' attitudes in lessons and what they are capable of achieving. They plan an extensive range of interesting and varied activities, for example, writing letters from the Lady of Shalott or describing a haunted house. These activities provide pupils with highly motivating learning experiences.
- Teachers make clear at the start of every lesson what pupils are expected to learn, and the high level of challenge set, especially for the most able, helps pupils to achieve as well as they can. This makes a very significant contribution to the rapid rates of pupils' learning.
- The teaching of mathematics is particularly effective. Imaginative activities and the setting of challenging work for pupils means they are working at levels beyond those usually expected for their age. This is because pupils acquire excellent mathematical understanding as teachers help them to see how mathematics works. They do this by designing tasks that enable pupils to explore and investigate mathematically, as well as making activities practical and fun. For example, to help Year 2 pupils remember halves and quarters pupils learned the rhyme 'Ooh! Ooh! Get some glue!'
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Planning is thorough and takes into account fully the skills pupils need to learn and develop in all subjects. They make sure that there are strong links with pupils' prior learning, and check pupils' learning and progress throughout each lesson. Resources are very well organised and the classroom environment is highly conducive to learning.
- Teaching assistants are extremely effective in supporting pupils' learning. They have trained alongside teachers in understanding and delivering aspects of the new curriculum, and consequently have high levels of subject knowledge.
- Teachers have become very skilled at teaching writing, due to new ways of teaching introduced by the headteacher and other school leaders. The strong emphasis on developing different types of writing and composing longer pieces from the early years on means pupils are developing excellent writing habits.

- Teachers take a close interest in developing pupils' love of reading, and as a result the quality of reading across the school is excellent. Pupils read widely, and their teachers encourage them to read a variety of challenging texts, checking carefully how they are enjoying their books.
- Specialist support and teaching for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are highly effective and enable them to make excellent progress. Teaching assistants show excellent understanding of pupils' needs and support them effectively.
- The quality of marking and feedback is excellent. Teachers give constructive feedback to pupils, which ensures that pupils have an excellent understanding of the quality of their work and what they need to do next in order to move forward. Pupils respond to teachers' feedback regularly. All pupils know their targets and next steps in learning.
- The school's leaders consult widely when working to improve the school further. A recent survey has asked parents about homework. The school is currently changing the information parents receive about their children's progress, following a small minority of responses to a recent school questionnaire and to Parent View, which said this could be improved.
- As the school has improved the quality of teaching, it has focused on reading, writing and mathematics. Although teaching in other subjects is strong, it is not yet as outstanding as it is in those subjects.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The achievement of all groups of pupils is outstanding and has improved rapidly since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils, including the most-able pupils, making and exceeding expected progress by the end of each school year is very high. By the time pupils leave Whitehills, they are exceptionally well prepared for their time in secondary school.
- Children join the Reception year with skills and knowledge that are typical of those expected for their age. They make excellent and sustained progress as they pass through the Reception classes, particularly in developing their early reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Pupils greatly enjoy reading. As a result of good and targeted teaching in the early years and Key Stage 1, pupils have a secure understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they are linked to).
- Pupils continue to make outstanding progress and overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is above average, particularly in mathematics.
- For each year in both key stages the school's internal assessments, confirmed by inspection evidence, show that pupils are making outstanding progress in English and mathematics. Writing, which was not as strong as reading in 2014, is now taught in a different way and achievement is equally strong. Inspectors looked at pupils' books in every class and every subject. All showed that pupils had made excellent progress.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is outstanding, as is the small minority from different ethnic backgrounds. This is because these groups' needs are very thoroughly assessed and they are very well supported and appropriately challenged.
- The most- able pupils are well challenged. Tasks are set to match their ability so that these pupils make excellent progress. The proportions of more able pupils who exceed expected progress in writing and mathematics are above average and their attainment in reading and mathematics is high by the end of Year 6. The school's own information shows that the most- able pupils are on track to achieve at even higher levels this year.
- In 2014, at the end of Year 6, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was a term ahead of pupils nationally and less than a term behind their classmates in mathematics, reading and writing. Current

school records show that disadvantaged pupils are making outstanding progress, similar to that of other pupils both in the school and nationally and that any remaining gaps are closing rapidly. The school uses the designated funds well to support these pupils, including small-group support and special teaching and support programmes in reading, writing and mathematics.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Highly effective teaching in the early years enables children to make outstanding progress. Accurate assessment leads adults to be able to plan appropriately for the next steps children need to take in their learning.
- As well as effective teaching of key skills, children are helped to think about what they are learning and to develop the skill of working by themselves and collaborating with others. Staff make sure that there is the right balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. Children are motivated and challenged and are very enthusiastic learners.
- A wide variety of opportunities are provided each day for adults to work with children, either as a separate group or on an individual basis. They observe and assess children's knowledge and skills and develop activities to promote their individual development and interests. As a result, children in the Reception year now make outstanding progress from their varied starting points. The reading, writing and number skills of children currently in the reception classes are now above those typical for children of that age.
- All adults contribute positively to the caring and supportive environment and this very effectively promotes children's safety, welfare and social skills.
- Children spend much of their time appropriately choosing their own activities, experimenting, and exploring the resources and their surroundings. They behave exceptionally well showing increasing powers of concentration and attentiveness in their explorations.
- The very well-resourced outside areas are available to extend children's physical activities and the opportunities for investigation and creative development are promoted well outside the classroom. For example, children told inspectors that, 'Magic forces behind the magnet make it stick to shiny surfaces' and, 'We will put our mud pies in the sun and the heat will cook them'.
- Staff are superbly led by enthusiastic leaders. Staff training is closely linked to ensuring the well-being of the children and improving the quality of their learning. For example, staff have been trained to successfully teach the school's systems for writing so that children get an excellent start to their work in later year groups.
- Staff work very hard to involve all children and their families. They have formed close links with the local community, through home visits and their availability to talk to parents. Parents are able to contribute to their child's assessment by making entries of their observations of their child's developments in the excellent 'learning journals'.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	121916
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	461990

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 of pupils on the school roll	421
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Harvie Hughes
Headteacher	Robert Hardcastle
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2013
Telephone number	01604 843780
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