

# Westlands Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	135158
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	382047
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Sheila Browning

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	385
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	George Clifton
<b>Trust Principal</b>	Jon Whitcombe
<b>Head of School</b>	Lynne Pearson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18–19 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Homewood Avenue Sittingbourne ME10 1XN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01795 470862
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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	11–12 January 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	382047



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Sheila Browning

Additional inspector

Claire Baldry

Additional inspector

Graham Pirt

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent in excess of ten hours observing 21 lessons, which involved 16 different teachers. They also heard children read. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, school leaders and members of staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, such as assessment data, development planning and safeguarding policies and procedures. 235 questionnaires were returned by parents and carers and 99 pupils and 37 staff questionnaires were analysed.

## Information about the school

Westlands is larger than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British; a small proportion are from minority ethnic backgrounds, but few are at early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is above average. A below average proportion have a statement of special educational needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in two Reception classes. Since the last inspection, the school has experienced significant staff changes, including at senior leader level. The school became part of an Academy on 1 September 2010. The then-newly appointed head of school took up her post with support from the executive principal of the Trust.

The school did not meet the current government floor standards in 2011, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 2. The school runs a daily breakfast club. An onsite nursery is managed independently from the school. The school has received a number of awards. These include Artsmark Gold, Bronze Modern Foreign Languages, Basic Skills Quality Mark, and the Full International Development Award.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. That said, it is improving rapidly on a number of fronts.
- The head of school has successfully restructured staff roles and navigated the changes in the school's status and improvements to the accommodation and resources. The shared determination to accelerate pupils' progress and raise pupils' attainment, through challenging targets, is driving this school forward.
- Parents, carers, pupils and staff say behaviour has improved significantly. Inspection findings confirm that pupils are typically polite, well behaved and try hard to do their best. Good quality safeguarding contributes to pupils' safety and enjoyment of school and to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children in the Early Year's Foundation Stage get off to a good start in their early reading, writing, number and social development. Pupils' attainment in mathematics, English and especially writing by Year 6, is below national averages and has been for some years. The school's current information on pupils' progress, confirmed by inspection findings, indicates a significant upward trend. This is because of the robust changes introduced. Though attainment levels are lower than average, pupils' accelerating progress means they are achieving better than before in reading, writing and mathematics.
- While improving rapidly more recently, the quality of teaching is typically satisfactory, because not all staff consistently have high expectations of more-able pupils and not all teaching guides pupils sufficiently to improve their work.
- The identification of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is not always accurate as some pupils who underperform have been wrongly identified as having special educational needs.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment in mathematics and English in Years 1 to 6, especially in writing, up to national average standards by summer 2013 by consolidating recent initiatives to improve pupils' skill levels and understanding.
- Increase the proportion of more effective teaching and learning throughout the school by July 2012 by:
  - sharing the best practice in the school
  - checking tasks are always matched closely to pupils' abilities and consistently guide them to as to how to improve their work.
- Review the identification of pupils registered as having special educational needs and/or disabilities so that the number on the register is accurate by April 2012.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children start school with skills significantly lower than those typically seen, especially in their literacy, language, communication and social skills. As a result of good teaching, far more children are ready to start the National Curriculum confidently in Year 1 than previously. This is because their personal development is, rightly, a priority so they learn effectively. Children make good progress from their low starting points, gaining basic reading, language and number skills well so that by Year 1, they have gained enough ground to be closer to reaching the expected levels in most areas of learning. Children observed confidently matched sounds to letters with 'air, ear, sh and ch', created written directions for their treasure maps and enjoyed accurately sorting pictures into different hoops.

The better targeting of children's learning needs has led to increased children's progress in Years 1 and 2, which has in turn helped results move from below average to broadly average attainment, including their reading skills by Year 2. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6, with the exception of girls and minority ethnic groups in mathematics and English, especially writing, is low. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have been most affected by the legacy of underachievement which is now being rigorously tackled. As a result, gaps in performance are narrowing quickly compared to those nationally, especially for boys and those who are disabled or have special educational needs. The school has a robust system to track pupils' progress, and is using the information effectively to measure the success of its initiatives over time. Recent school-based data collected on pupils' progress, confirmed by first-hand inspection findings, indicate pupils' progress is accelerating rapidly, with larger proportions of pupils throughout the school reaching average and higher standards.

The school is well focused on developing pupils' weaker literacy skills, especially writing, along with their numeracy skills. Specific initiatives, combining individual support, groups organised by ability in literacy and numeracy across Years 5 and 6,

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and additional lessons at the academy, are all helping pupils to 'catch up'. The impact is that pupils are better prepared for secondary school. Though standards in reading, as indicated in national assessments, are below average by Year 6, those pupils who were heard reading use effective strategies to sound out unfamiliar words, establish meaning and to enjoy a range of familiar stories which they read confidently.

Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs have effective support to help them overcome their individual difficulties. Sharing of expertise within the academy and external speech and language expertise has particularly benefitted pupils. However, errors in registration and identification have meant that underperforming pupils have too frequently been included on the special needs register, meaning their support has not always been appropriate.

Parents and carers report they are very pleased with the interventions and changes during the past 18 months. A spin-off benefit is that pupils' much improved attitudes to learning and behaviour are typical around the school and in lessons because they are now enjoying learning more.

### **Quality of teaching**

A key reason why pupils' achievement is improving is that the quality of teaching has improved from a position two years ago when the local authority judged a very high percentage of teaching to be inadequate. Teaching is typically at least satisfactory, with an improving proportion of good teaching particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff recognise that low levels of communication and literacy are a barrier to the youngest children's progress and are tackling this successfully. In Reception, an effective assessment system is embedded and this information, combined with that from parents, carers and pre-school settings, is used well to pinpoint any underperformance early on so lessons and activities can be tailored more accurately to children's needs. The improved environment, including an impressive outside learning area, good quality teaching, resources and partnerships, has had a marked impact on children's achievement.

Teachers' good role modelling promotes respectful relationships and develops good levels of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The practice of sharing with pupils what they will be learning helps set clear expectations. Pupils like the 'our learning journey' displays in all classrooms which give prompts and ideas on how to improve work and show what different levels look like. In one Year 2 lesson, pupils knew that capital letters and finger spaces between words were needed when they wrote sentences using 'tricky words'. Effectively deployed teaching assistants provide good additional support for those that find learning difficult and the few who speak English as an additional language. The themed curriculum linking different subjects ensures a range of activities that engage pupils' interest. Teachers' questioning reinforces learning and the use of 'talk partners' is having a positive effect on improving pupils' speaking and listening skills. Assessment routines are

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systematic, including regular pupil progress meetings held between teachers and senior staff. These enable detailed and accurate tracking of pupils' progress, with timely interventions to support those at risk of underperforming. Where teaching is less effective, it is generally because teachers do not stretch the thinking of more-able pupils, the pace of learning is too slow, marking does not indicate next steps for improvement or opportunities are missed to recap on previous learning.

Parents and carers expressed views that teaching was good and much improved, and inspection findings confirm it has certainly improved, although it is not yet consistently good in all year groups.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils and parents comment about the positive improvements in behaviour over time. This has been a significant turning point that contributes very positively to this safe, well-ordered school. Pupils work happily together and in the Ofsted questionnaire nearly all said they felt safe and enjoyed school. Pupils shared their experiences of Year 6 with inspectors and said they made more progress in the Year 6 sets because there was more challenge. One said, 'The school got better, the new headteacher was stricter, behaviour improved, teaching was better.' Another said, 'The teachers squeezed more into lessons.' Instances of bullying are very few and pupils show a good awareness of the different forms of bullying; they say any incidents are dealt with quickly and fairly. Attendance, though average, is much improved.

### **Leadership and management**

The school has steered through difficult times because of the high expectations of senior leaders to tackle weaknesses. Significant staff restructuring, a rigorous monitoring cycle of teaching and learning, and external support have had a significant impact on raising pupils' achievement. The school has been prepared to act decisively and firmly in order to improve the quality of teaching and provision. New buildings, refurbishment to classrooms and increased resources have also improved the learning environment to good effect. Middle leaders, some of whom are new to their role, are developing expertise whilst others demonstrate good impact on developing their areas of responsibility. All share a clear and realistic view of the priorities needed to continue the improvement and fulfil their ambitions to become a good school.

The school uses the links within its academy status effectively to improve its own provision. Leaders promote equality and tackle any discrimination, seen in the narrowing of the gap between the achievement of different groups of pupils and improvements in the quality of provision to ensure this continues. Initiatives include sharing teaching expertise, rigorous self-evaluation and pupil progress tracking systems that are well proven and robust. These initiatives reflect the school's good capacity to improve further. Teachers' expectations have been raised through

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intensive staff training, coaching and support. Consequently, all pupils' achievement has improved. However, the sharing of best practice has yet to secure consistently good teaching. The well-organised curriculum is more coherent and broad so that it better meets pupils' needs. Links with the secondary school have helped to develop teachers' subject expertise and provided wider learning opportunities for pupils in English, mathematics, science, and the arts. All contribute positively to developing pupils' good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are immensely proud of their school and enjoy responsibilities as school councillors, prefects, or being head boy or girl. They told inspectors they enjoyed learning, sports, including swimming, all the different clubs, visits and visitors and especially the street party held for the recent Royal Wedding.

The knowledgeable and experienced governors, drawn from across the academy, are supportive and also hold the school to account well. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are rigorous and meet statutory requirements.

Parents and carers take part in Reception 'stay and play' sessions and value other opportunities to work with the school whether through the parent group, fundraising or putting on events that benefit the pupils. One summed up many of the favourable parent or carer comments received: 'The school has made great progress and improvement over the last 18 months and is well on its way to being a good school.'

## 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development, taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



13 January 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Westlands Primary School, Sittingbourne ME10 1XN**

Thank you so much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and the conversations we had were extremely useful in finding out about all the exciting activities that are helping to improve your learning.

- Yours is a satisfactory school that is improving quickly. This is because your headteacher, staff and governors are all determined to make it the best.
- You told us how much more you enjoy learning now, feel safe and that behaviour has really improved.
- You make satisfactory progress overall, but more recently many of you are making better progress than before in English and mathematics and in lots of different subjects too. Keep this up!
- The staff work hard to make sure you are safe and well cared for.
- Children in Reception classes get off to a good start in their learning.
- Many of you told us how proud you were to be at Westlands and of all the different clubs, including swimming and breakfast club, that you enjoy!

We can see that things are improving but for several years, too many pupils leaving your school have not reached the levels they need to in English and mathematics. In order to make your school even better, we have asked your headteacher and staff to:

- help all of you to do even better in mathematics and English, especially writing
- make sure there is more good teaching, so that you learn more quickly
- check that the school identifies the right pupils that need very specific help and not mix them up with pupils that might need an extra boost in their learning.

You can help too by trying to produce your very best work, especially when writing.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning  
Lead inspector

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